HŌNEN SHŌNIN AND THE PURE LAND MOVEMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

In this study of Hōnen Shōnin and his relation to the institutionalization of an independent Japanese Pure Land school, I have attempted to isolate the religious and doctrinal issues which affected the evolution of Pure Land salvationism in general and Japanese Buddhism in particular.

The background for this analysis is provided in Part One, which is a discussion of the religious background to Hōnen and his ideas, and a summary of the immediate historical and religious circumstances out of which Hōnen's Pure Land soteriology emerged. Part Two consists of a detailed analytical description of the Senchaku-shū (選擇集), Hōnen's major dissertation on Pure Land doctrine.

My thesis is that the reconciliation of the two main currents which converged during the late Heian and early Kamakura periods, namely the Pure Land tradition transmitted from India to East Asia and the popular religious forms indigenous to Japan, climaxed in the single-practice Pure Land movement of Hōnen. This reconciliation was not as much the result of internal institutional processes, however, as of the unique cultural and historical circumstances present in the last quarter of the twelfth century, when Hōnen was most actively engaged in his ministry.

My intention is to show that Hōnen's contribution to the Pure Land tradition and his significance in Japanese religious history have been greatly underestimated, particularly in the West, and it is my hope that this study will provide a solid base from which to initiate a new evaluation of Hōnen and his movement.

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INTRODUCTION

This study is the result of much inquiry into the philosophical, social, and religious origins of popular Buddhism in Japan. In spite of numerous studies of popular religion in Japan, including a few dealing with particular personalities, there has not to my knowledge been any specific documentation in a Western language of either the Pure Land movement or the first great catalyst in the popular Buddhist reformation of the Kamakura period, Hōnen Shōnin (法然上人; a/k/a Genkū 源空 : 1133-1212). To correct this deficiency I propose to provide here a solid introduction to Hōnen and his contribution to the Pure Land tradition.

Specifically, the issues to which my investigation has been addressed are three:

1) the textual and doctrinal history of Pure Land Buddhism until the time of Hōnen;
2) the development of a popular salvationist movement based on the teachings of Pure Land Buddhism;
3) the birth of an independent Japanese popular salvationist school, based on Hōnen's interpretation of Pure Land Buddhist teachings.

The paper begins with a discussion of the religious background to Hōnen and his ideas. This includes a summary of Pure Land Buddhist doctrine and of the key personalities in the Pure Land tradition in India, China, and Japan before Hōnen, with special reference to Pure Land salvationism in the three countries. The latter portion of Part I focuses on Hōnen himself. A brief biographical sketch provides the immediate historical and religious circumstances out of which Hōnen's Pure Land soteriology emerged and places Hōnen and his movement in perspective with regard to both Japanese Buddhism

in general and the Pure Land tradition in particular.

The second part of this thesis is an analytical description of the contents of the Senchaku-shū (選擇集), Hōnen's major dissertation on Pure Land doctrine. Attention will be placed particularly on those key doctrines discussed in Part I.

For the introductory section on early Pure Land Buddhism, I have relied a great deal on FUJITA Kōtatsu (藤田宏達)'s Studies in Early Pure Land Thought (Genshi Jōdo Shisō no Kenkyū 原始浄土思想の研究) for both textual and doctrinal background. The primary text used to establish Hōnen's doctrinal position in the latter section is his Senchaku-shū (T.2608), a text unavailable in any Western language. I have otherwise relied on established translations in Japanese, French, and English for most secondary scriptural and historical works. All research materials but the primary text therefore are modern, though the authenticity of critical references has been checked when possible and cited when appropriate.

The purpose of the study is to produce a well-documented introduction to Hōnen, and to the Pure Land movement he founded. Such a study will hopefully lead to a better understanding of Hōnen's place in the Pure Land tradition and his significance in Japanese Buddhism. This will also provide the necessary background for a complete and annotated translation of Hōnen's Senchaku-shū, which is a vital necessity if the Western world is really in the long run to understand Japanese Buddhism.

Chapter One

The soteriological doctrine which resulted in the Pure Land school of Hōnen in thirteenth century Japan had its origins in the Mahāsaṅghika Reformation in India around the first century B.C. It was then that the ideal of the Bodhisattva emerged, and from it the philosophical and soteriological features of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Over the next few centuries these features were developed and refined until a number of distinct schools emerged. While the distinctions were in fact lost for some centuries after their introduction to China,[1] this fundamental shift in religious perspective and the resulting forms of religious practice which found expression in Early Mahāyāna Buddhism continued to develop. It is this new perspective, particularly as represented in the evolution of early Pure Land Buddhist thought, which is the subject of the first chapter of this paper.[2]

The germinal forms of Pure Land thought sprang from the earliest Mahāyāna tradition as expressed in the Prajñāpāramitā literature, which originated in Southeast India (Andhra) during the first century B.C.[3] From there the new 'bodhisattva' movement spread west and then north, so that by the first century A.D. a large number of Mahāyāna texts had already been written, ostensibly to explore the implications of the initial Prajñāpāramitā teaching and to clarify its mystical message. Among these texts were the earliest versions of the Pure Land scriptures, namely the Larger and Smaller Sukhāvatī-vyūha sūtras, both of which were composed in Northwest India (Kuṣāṇa) in approximately 100 A.D.[4]

The Larger Sukhāvatī-vyūha (大無量壽經) is extant in the original Sanskrit as well as in 3 Tibetan and five Chinese translations.[5] The oldest extant Chinese translation was done by Chih Ch'ien (支謙 : 222-253) during the early third century. It is identified in Japanese as the Larger Amida

Sūtra (大阿彌陀經). The orthodox version of the Larger Pure Land Sūtra, however, is the Muryōju-kyō (無量壽經) translated by Buddhabhadra (佛陀跋陀羅 359-429) and Pao-yün (寶雲: 376-449) in about 421.[6]

The Smaller Sukhāvatī-vyūha is extant in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese. The Sanskrit version consists of materials discovered in Japan and available in a number of manuscripts and publications.[7] The earliest Chinese translation was done by Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什 : 343-413 or 350-409) in Ch'ang-an (長安) in 402 and is known as the Amida Sūtra (阿彌陀經 T.366). A second translation was done by Hsüan-tsang (玄奘 : 600-664) (T.367); there was apparently one other, by Guṇabhadra (求那跋陀羅 :394-468), but it is now lost.[8]

Besides these, a third text known as the Kuan-wu-liang-shou-ching (觀無量壽經 T.365) or Contemplation Sūtra is included in the Pure Land canon and recognized as authoritative by mainstream schools in China and Japan. It was written in Central Asia in the fifth century,[9] and the only extant version[10] is said to have been translated into Chinese by Kālayaśas (畺良耶舍 : c.383-442 or 424-442).

These three scriptures taken together comprise what is popularly known as the "Triple Sūtra." Doctrinally, they present a coherent theory of salvation which is not only consistent with the main currents of Mahāyāna thought in general, but also representative of the earliest stages of the bodhisattva movement in both India and China.

The evolution of the bodhisattva doctrine as represented first in the Prajñāpāramitā literature and crystallized in the early Pure Land sūtras was primarily a soteriological theory which took on two forms in early Mahāyāna Buddhism. The first was an ethical formula[11] which recognized the validity of mystical intuition in Buddhist philosophical rationality (i.e., the abhdharmic tradition, at that time primarily the Sarvāstivādin school).[12] The practice of the Pāramitās was designed to insure the attainment of insight

into 'Śūnyatā,' and was epitomized by the Mādhyamika school of Nāgārjuna.[13] Later, Vasubandhu, the founder of the Yogācāra school, also attempted to formulate a consistent and practical application of the philosophical theories of the Prajñāpāramitā.[14] Their expositions of Prajñāpāramitā metaphysical and epistemological theories were used to explain the Amitābha doctrine, and laid the foundation for the Pure Land movement. Their contributions were recognized by later Pure Land apologists who identified Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu as the first two patriarchs in the orthodox Pure Land tradition.[15]

The second form was a popular application of the bodhisattva doctrine, and emphasized the climactic role of Karuṇā ('compassion') in what was fundamentally a soteriological religious movement.[16] Karuṇā was the motivation for the vows of Dharmākara (法藏), and established the legitimacy of reliance on the power of Amitābha, providing thereby the hope of an effective and practical means of salvation for those unable to carry out more rigorous traditional practices.

While the relationship of these two forms and their assimilation in Pure Land Buddhist doctrine is a matter of some interest in the consideration of the evolution of Pure Land thought, a more extensive treatment is beyond the scope of this study.[17] It is the second form which is the major theme of this paper.

The specifics of this Pure Land salvationism can be summarized in four principal doctrines: Faith, Nembutsu, Devotional Attitude, and Rebirth. It was upon these doctrines that the movement was founded, and on these points that its development in China and Japan turned. One hopes that, by examining the doctrines in their earliest expression, it will be possible to see what Hōnen's contribution to Pure Land Buddhism was and how his interpretation

represented a distinctly Japanese application of the major principles of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

I. The Doctrines

A. Faith

The term 'faith' as used in the Pure Land texts is a translation of three distinct Sanskrit terms. Śraddhā (Pali: Saddhā; 信) is a general term found in Buddhist and non-Buddhist literature as well. It refers to an intellectual affirmation of some teaching, and a volitional assent to its consequences.[18] It was this rational conception of faith which was included in the original Prajñāpāramitā formula, and related to the virtue of Wisdom ("Prajñā";般若).[19] Adhimukti (信解/勝解/明信/希求) was a more specialized Buddhist term for enlightened faith. This "Enlightened Faith" was defined as firm and unwavering, and is the mark of the adept (stream-winner: srota'āpanna: 預流支);[20] it is basically a confirmation (affirmation) of the insights of the intellect.[21] The connection between faith (śraddhā) and Wisdom, and therefore the relationship between Faith (adhimukti) and Contemplation (samādhi), was clearly recognizable and established even in early Buddhism. Looked at from another perspective, the function of Contemplation is the attainment of Wisdom; Wisdom is simply the recognition of Absolute Reality (śūnyatā). Faith functions first as a rational assent to the teachings on Samādhi and Prajñā and then, as Prajñā is realized, it becomes an affirmation of the reality of the Wisdom (Prajñā) attained through Contemplation.

In the Pure Land scriptures, however, the concern was clearly with faith itself and its soteriological meaning, not with Prajñā; no clear identification of the two can be found in the texts. Thus the terms

Prasāda (浄信;澄浄;喜悦) and Prasannacitta (心澄浄) are more commonly used to identify the faith which is associated with Amitābha devotion. NAKAMURA Hajime (中村元) defines this faith as the "calm and pure state of mind in which one feels the bliss of serenity."[22] It is "the tranquil nature of faith."[23] It has a peculiarly Buddhist characteristic in that it was originally related to meditative techniques.[24] This faith in all the Buddhas, but most importantly in Pure Land teaching faith in Amitābha, was epitomized in the practice of Nembutsu (念佛),[25] which was already an accepted part of early Buddhism in general.[26] The question of faith, especially for later apologists, was then not related particularly to philosophical paradigms, but rather to the form and efficacy of nembutsu practice, and it was this which caused the greatest disagreement within and without the Pure Land tradition.

Two further points must be made with regard to faith in the Pure Land scriptures. The first is that faith is fundamentally a suspension of, or dispensing with, doubt. It is in effect abandonment to the teaching of the Buddha; in this it is characteristically Buddhist. But the Pure Land doctrine that even a single arising of faith is sufficient (for rebirth) is a concept unfound in either primitive or sectarian Buddhist thought. It is, however, a common motif in other Mahāyāna scriptures as well, so the Pure Land doctrine of faith can be said to be well within the main stream of Buddhist tradition.[27]

The second major clarification regards the relationship of Pure Land faith as discussed above and the concept of "bhakti" or devotional faith. Although pious devotionalism undoubtedly had its place in popular Pure Land practice as it did in Indian religious practice at large during the same period, the term "bhakti" does not occur anywhere in the Pure

Land texts themselves.[28] Fujita maintains that the religious concept of faith expressed in early Pure Land Buddhism was distinct from that represented in contemporary Hindu literature such as the Baghavadgītā; the relationship of faith and samādhi mentioned earlier distinguishes it clearly from the "fanatical" or "frenzied" element associated with "bhakti."[29]

B. Nembutsu

The early concept of "nembutsu" was quite different from later Chinese and Japanese interpretations, but those later interpretations derived justification from the scriptural passages dealing with the three ranks or grades of aspirants who were to be reborn in the Pure Land. Most clearly described in the Larger Sukhāvatī-vyūha, this distinction of types is not unique in Pure Land scriptures nor in Buddhist thought as a whole. This is not to deny, however, that the description in the Larger Sūtra is in fact the cornerstone of later Pure Land soteriological doctrine, which will be discussed in detail in the next section. Suffice it to say that the theory of different practices for various believers was ostensibly determined on the basis of the vows of Dharmākara,[30] and all revolved around the proper application of Nembutsu.

The term "nembutsu" itself is the Japanese pronunciation of two Chinese characters which were used to translate a number of religious terms described in early Buddhist literature. Fundamentally, it means "Reflection (念 "nen") on the Buddha (佛 "Butsu")." In Pure Land scriptures[31] this term was used originally to mean meditation on the Buddha and by extension contemplation or visualization of his attributes. The key term is 念 (Ch.: nien) which was used to translate three discrete Sanskrit terms;

1) Anusmṛti (also translated 憶念=隨念): "(unfailing) recollection";

2) Manasikāra (also translated 思念=作意): "bearing in mind or pondering";

3) Prasannacitta (also translated 澄淨心) or Prasāda (澄淨): "being in a calm and pure state of mind." [32]

The earliest systematization of this kind of devotional practice occurred in the Pāli Nikāyas, where we find descriptions of the "six states of ever-minding" (六隨念). [33] Reflection on the Buddha, the first of these six, consisted also of reflecting on the ten titles of the Buddha. [34] This meditative nembutsu was extended eventually to include invocational nembutsu, whereby a practitioner uttered the name of the Buddha as part of his devotional ritual.

It is clear that nowhere in the original texts is nembutsu used to refer to independent invocational practice as later Chinese and Japanese proponents claimed. The original references to nembutsu invocation are typical and representative not only of early Mahāyāna practices but also of pre-sectarian Buddhism and even of non-buddhistic traditions in India at the time. [35] While it is also clear that nembutsu is promoted for both monastics and laity alike, visualization itself was directly linked to meditative techniques in which invocation was but one facet. [36] Translations of the Sukhāvatī-vyūha sūtras began to appear in the early fourth century; these were cited by later apologists, notably Shan-tao (善導 : 613-681), as evidence of the efficacy of invocation, yet these interpretations were clearly at variance with the original intent of the earliest scriptures. Since it was not until at least the fourth century that explicit references to invocational nembutsu appeared in Chinese translations, however, it is quite possible that it was along with the trend toward the use of mantra formulae in Mahāyāna Buddhism generally [37] that

nembutsu came to be seen as a form of incantation as well as a contemplation technique. It was not until the fifth century that unequivocal scriptural references to effective invocational nembutsu became evident, in the Central Asian Contemplation Sūtra referred to earlier.

In the Pure Land scriptures, meditative nembutsu took on a secondary attribution and referred to "seeing" the Buddha Amitābha. This took two forms. The first applied to the apparition of Amitābha at the hour of death, but such visions were in the earliest texts limited to those aspirants of the first and second rank.[38] The idea played a most important role in both the establishment and the development of Pure Land thought, but this is not to say that it was a teaching limited to the Pure Land school. It appears in most of the earliest Mahāyāna scriptures, and yet it was certainly in the Pure Land tradition that its soteriological significance was most fully exploited.[39]

The second form of "seeing" the Buddha was the appearance of Amitābha in dreams. This was perhaps naturally considered inferior to being greeted by (a) Buddha at the moment of death, but could be experienced even during the final moments of one's life by all ranks of believers in lieu of the deathbed visitation. While it is recognized as one benefit of nembutsu practice among many, this "Buddha-vision" is primarily a striking reminder of the distinctions between various types of practitioners. Essentially, the first form is the doctrinally significant one in terms of Rebirth, and the second is perhaps a formal concession to the universality of Pure Land soteriology.

C. Devotional Attitude

According to the Contemplation Sūtra, there are three conditions necessary for effective nembutsu practice. These are classified as the "three devotional hearts (attitudes) [三心]," namely Sincerity, Profound Trust, and Dedicated Longing or steadfast hope. Elements of all three are found in the Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtras as well,[40] but were most systematized in the later text.

By Sincerity (至誠心) is meant Prasāda (cf. above, p. 7), the serene state of mind in which all distractions are dismissed, and all attention focused on the Buddha or his attributes. This was originally linked to meditative techniques, and referred to a state of contemplative consciousness. By Profound Trust (深心) is meant the utter conviction that, if one performs nembutsu, it will effect rebirth in accord with the vow of Dharmākara (Amitābha). Dedicated Longing (廻向發願心) or steadfast hope refers to the aspiration for rebirth as a result of nembutsu practice, and came to be interpreted as conscious reliance on the efficacy of nembutsu itself rather than on any individual merit.[41]

The latter two attitudes and their implications are particularly significant here. Since the distinction between those of higher aptitude, who could theoretically effect their own release, and those of lesser aptitude, who could not realistically expect singlehandedly to accomplish that release, was drawn, it followed reasonably that external help would be required. The availability of that assistance was in fact an integral feature of Mahāyāna soteriology in general, but it was the Pure Land movement, particularly in China and Japan, that exploited the theory by expounding the ultimate conclusion that rebirth was a result not of purity of practice but of purity of attitude. Thus, while

faith and proper attitude were characteristic requirements of any religious act in both Buddhist and non-buddhist soteriology, it was the Pure Land scriptures which recognized the practical problem of devotional attitude and provided a theoretical solution by demystifying the human element in religious ritual. It took even the Pure Land movement until the thirteenth century, however, to clarify the implications of this theory, and it was Hōnen who eventually systematized the diversity of doctrine in his Senchaku-shū.

Nonetheless, it has been even in modern times the interpretation of the nembutsu practice itself rather than the cultivation of these attitudes which has caused the greatest controversy. In China and later in Japan, the question of whether nembutsu referred to invocational or meditative practice, as well as the effective number of nembutsu, far outweighed the critical importance of devotional attitudes, which were in the original texts[42] of far greater moment as religious motifs. This discrepancy underscores the distinction between the philosophical and practical elements in the evolution of the Pure Land tradition, as well as in Mahāyāna Buddhism in general.[43] A more detailed discussion of this problem and the development of Pure Land soteriology in China will be taken up in the following chapters.

D. Rebirth

The doctrine of Rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land quite obviously played a central role in the evolution of the Pure Land tradition. While later generations of believers and scholars have either assumed the doctrine implicitly or glossed over its origins, however, it is important to trace its development in order to establish the roots of the Pure Land movement which Hōnen inherited and to place the tradition within the main stream of Mahāyāna Buddhism. This survey will approach the doctrine from three points of view: first, the origin of the Amitābha character; second, the concept of Sukhāvatī itself; and finally, in light of the first two, the doctrine of Rebirth itself and its origin.

1) There are two current theories on the source of the Amitābha legend. One asserts that its roots are in Zoroastrian mythology, the second claims that it is a purely Indian conception.[44] The second theory can be further subdivided into two: Vedic and Buddhist mythological models. Neither theory is without faults, however, and Professor Fujita approaches the issue from yet another point of view. He begins by analyzing the name itself, and finds that before the original Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtras, the names Amitāyus and Amitābha were nowhere clearly identified. It was only with the appearance of the Pure Land scriptures that the two names can be associated. While similar names and conceptions were used in sectarian Buddhism, especially among the Mahāsaṅghika, it was in the process of the development of a new transcendental concept of Buddhahood that the theory of Amitābha and his Western Paradise arose, and it was as a result of the popularization of Prajñā teaching and particularly the new bodhisattva doctrine that the personality of Amitābha evolved.

This idea will be developed more thoroughly below. Suffice it to

say here that the Amitābha legend sprang from the main currents of Buddhism, and specifically from the new bodhisattva movement; it represents the epitome of Buddhist literary convention, and is typical of early Mahāyāna popular soteriology.

2) The concept of Paradise in the Pure Land scriptures originated in early Mahāyāna, in conjunction with the evolution of the transcendental Buddha theory. Unlike the latter, however, this concept was clearly based on very early Vedic as well as Buddhist mythology. As Fujita points out, it is a reliable explanation that the actual descriptions of the Pure Lands of Amitabha are modeled on the design specifications for stūpas, which were explained in the Vinayas.[45]

The earliest references to Buddhist Paradise were metaphorical allusions to the blissful state of Nirvāṇa. Even in early sectarian Buddhism, however, references to Paradise make no mention of the terms "pure" or "purified," thus leading us to the conclusion that it was with the introduction of Mahāyānist theories that the Amitābhist conception of the Pure Land evolved.

The influence of the bodhisattva doctrine mentioned earlier can be seen in the development of the theory of transcendental Buddhas on the one hand and the evolution of a practical soteriological doctrine on the other. Dayal argues that the initial concept of Buddhist "faith," which appears in early texts as "Saddhā (Skt.: Śraddhā),"[46] referred to an intellectual and volitional assent and confidence in some teaching, which in this case was that of the historical Buddha.[47] It was therefore much more an intellectual exercise than an emotional, physical (ritualistic) expression of adoration for some charismatic individual.[48] Gradually, as the reputation and dynamic personality of Gautama became more widely recognized, a psychological change took place. No longer was

intellectual affirmation paramount; faith came to be an emotional, deeply religious act where belief and devotion were directed primarily toward a personality rather than his ideas.

Consequently, after Gautama's death, the concept of Buddha itself was expanded. The Sthavira sect, under the influence of Jainism and Hinduism, began to idealize the historical Buddha. This tendency toward spiritualization of the Buddha culminated around the time of the Mahāsāṅghikas, under whom the Buddha concept became totally objectified and universalized. The historical Buddha, according to them, was only a magical creation of the transcendental Buddha.

This conceptualized Buddha was certainly unapproachable to the ordinary believer, and thus an intermediary was required. Both the Kathāvatthu and the Milindapañhā had stressed the social nature of the Arhat, and this was a clear precedent for the bodhisattva doctrine as characterized in the Prajñāpāramitā literature. But it also displayed the growing tendency (especially by the first century B.C.) to return to the earlier history of Gautama and to the original ideals. The Kathāvatthu had begun in the third century to raise questions and to stir up interest and speculation concerning Gautama's biography and previous lives. In fact it is clear that

> Originally, the term Bodhisattva referred to Śākyamuni before he achieved Buddhahood... This practicing Buddha (i.e., Śākyamuni) was called Bodhisattva. But even before this, Śākyamuni was considered to be merely a man who was following the Path of many former Buddhas who had already gone to the world of Enlightenment. On the other hand, thanks to Zoroastrian influence from Persia, a belief had sprung up that a Buddha called Maitreya would appear some time in the future. This so-called Future Buddha was supposed to be a person who was practicing the Faith as a contemporary bodhisattva. Since (according to this belief) there were innumerable "Future

> Buddhas" in the past as well, it came to be understood that there are in any age bodhisattvas without number.[49]

Thus, by the time of the Prajñāpāramitā literature, the concepts of the transcendental Buddhas and innumerable Buddha-lands as well as great Bodhisattvas ("Mahāsattvas") were clearly asserted, thus providing a rationale for external help on the path to salvation.

Out of this expanded definition of Buddhahood, and as a result of the popularization of the bodhisattva ideal,[50] "Paradise" came to mean the realms of these innumerable transcendental Buddhas and their attendants. These realms were in essence "ideal(ized) societies"[51] where, in the presence of the Buddha, devotees would be able to achieve the highest stages of the Bodhisattva Path. It was through the intercession of the bodhisattvas, who applied the merit accumulated through their good works towards the salvation of others, that believers were able to achieve rebirth--not in a more favorable situation in this world, but in a fantastic purified Buddha-realm beyond the horizon.[52]

3) In the Pure Land tradition, this rebirth is to a Buddha-realm in the West presided over by Amitābha Buddha and his attendants, chief among whom are the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara (盧樓亘 /觀世音) and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (摩訶那鉢 /大勢至).[53] While on the surface this state physically resembles the world we live in now, it was traditionally so described as a popular image to inspire the average devotee to practice. On its more sophisticated doctrinal levels, however, this "Pure Land" is beyond the dimensions of time or space, and its form and function are closely related to the practice of meditation described earlier as Buddha-visualization.

According to the earliest Pure Land scriptural references, "rebirth" is actually a kind of spiritual metamorphosis,[54] and in allegorical terms

the setting for this transformation is a jewelled pond in the land of Amitābha. Aspirants of the highest rank are reborn on a lotus blossom, and have attained the status of "non-returning bodhisattva." This has been accomplished by successful samādhi-practice in the previous (i.e., this mundane) existence, and in fact fits quite readily within the general Mahayanist tradition of meditation, visualization, and release. On the other hand, aspirants of the middle and lowest rank, not having established perfect Faith in the Pure Land of Amitābha, are reborn in a jewelled tower in the remote corners of the Amitābha realm, and for five hundred lifetimes are unable to visualize the Buddha (perfectly) or to hear his (perfect) teaching expounded. Put simply, this indicates that the cultivation of unfailing Faith in the Pure Land teaching is the paramount consideration in determining successful "metamorphosis," and those who are reborn in the presence of Amitābha are characterized by the purity of their faith and trust in Amitābha.[55] Thus, the desire to see Amitābha is the necessary prerequisite for rebirth itself, and the cultivation of the other virtues outlined in the vows of the bodhisattva Dharmākara (and summarized above under "Devotional Attitude" and "Faith") were prerequisites for the spiritual metamorphosis described above. This spiritual metamorphosis is in fact a representative doctrine in Mahayanist soteriology in general.

II. Summary/Conclusion

In the final analysis, two distinctions need to be made in the discussion of Pure Land teaching. The first is between Pure Land rebirth and metamorphosis, the second between the types of devotees who are able to achieve these states. As mentioned above, the term "rebirth" refers generally to the accomplishment of a more favorable situation in the next existence than that in the present situation. Technically, this was originally connected with the early Buddhist and Vedic concepts of Karma, but, with the advent of the bodhisattva doctrine, it came to mean realization of an idealized state wherein one could progress unimpeded along the path to "enlightenment." On the doctrinal level, this came to be recognized as a transformed existence which was attained through traditional religious practices, chief among which was contemplation. This accomplishment was referred to as "metamorphosis." Yet on the popular level, such rigorous practices were beyond the means of the ordinary devotees, and, in keeping with the thrust of the bodhisattva ideal, religious attitude came to be seen as more critical than traditional religious discipline. This shift in emphasis occurred both in theoretical and practical teaching, and was most apparent in later Pure Land texts and in Chinese recensions of the early scriptures.

In recognizing the various degrees of aptitude among devotees, the Pure Land tradition formalized the popularization of Buddhist soteriology and practice. While this process of institutionalization was not completed until Hōnen's doctrinal systematization in thirteenth-century Japan, the seeds for it were clearly planted in the earliest strata of Indian bodhisattva teaching, and its development resulted from early Chinese interpretations of the original Sukhāvatī texts. Yet to be reconciled were the distinctions between the efficient agents in securing this spiritual metamorphosis: the question

of self-realization versus Other-power reliance came to be a key element in the later evolution of Pure Land doctrine in both China and Japan.

Having now looked at the textual history of the most important doctrines and noted their evolution within the greater Buddhist tradition, let us now proceed to a more detailed discussion of their interpretation in the Chinese context, which served as the immediate source of the Pure Land tradition in Japan.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER ONE

1. Leon Hurvitz, et al., "The First Systemization of Buddhist Thought in China," Unpublished manuscript, Vancouver, B.C., 1975. Cf. also Richard H. Robinson, Early Mādhyamika in India and China (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), and Erik Zürcher, The Buddhist Conquest of China (Leiden: Brill, 1959).

2. Much of this chapter is based on FUJITA Kōtatsu 藤田宏達, Genshi Jōdo Shisō No Kenkyū 原始浄土思想の研究 [Studies in Early Pure Land Thought] (Tōkyō: Iwanami, 1970). See particularly pp. 354-376 for a detailed discussion of the relationship between Prajñāpāramitā and Pure Land thought.

3. Edward Conze, The Prajñāpāramitā Literature (London: Mouton and Co., 1960), pp. 9-12. Also, UI Hakuju 宇井伯寿, Bukkyō Kyōtenshi 佛教経典史 [History of Buddhist Scriptures] (Tōkyō: 1953), pp. 100-110, and Etienne Lamotte, Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna, Vol, I (Louvain: Bureaux du Muséon, 1944), pp. 25-26.

4. Fujita, p. 257.

5. See Fujita, pp. 51-61.

6. See Fujita, p. 74.

7. See Fujita, pp. 97-102.

8. See Fujita, pp. 103-114.

9. See Fujita, pp. 116-120. This sūtra is one of a number introduced to China during the fifth and sixth centuries which outlined practical methods of contemplative nembutsu and Amitābha devotion.

10. Fragments are extant in Uighur.

11. For a further discussion and comprehensive bibliography of prajñāpāramitā, see my "Quest for the Ideal Man," unpublished manuscript, Vancouver, 1974. It might be helpful to outline the evolution of the Paramita theory, since the Mahayanists contrasted the Paramitas with the ethical ideals of "Hīnayāna," specifically, the 37 bodhipāksika-dharmas, which were considered monastic and anti-social in scope and tendency. The Arhats then were regarded as representatives of merely negative ethical ideals, while the Pāramitās were proposed as a scheme of positive moral development. The Bodhisattva was to establish himself firmly in existence and struggle; his strength would come from application of the Pāramitās.

The Pāramitās, which were first mentioned in the Aṣṭasāhasrikā (8000 verse) Prajñāpāramitā sūtra, have certain general characteristics. They are "sublime, disinterested, supremely important, and imperishable." Each Pāramitā is developed through a progressive scheme of action involving three stages:

1) Ordinary: the virtue when practiced for "worldly" happiness;
2) Extraordinary: the virtue when practiced in order to achieve Nirvāṇa;
3) Superlative ('Pāramitā'): the virtue practiced for the liberation and welfare of all sentient beings.

These stages reappear in Jōdo theology which will be discussed in following chapters.

12. Cf. Frederick J. Streng, Emptiness: A Study of Religious Meaning (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), pp. 28-35.

13. See Streng for a detailed discussion of the religious concept of Śūnyatā.

14. While in many ways the two philosophers' interpretations were distinctly at odds, their basic assumptions concerning liberation seem to me to be compatible. The way to favorable rebirth and eventual Buddhahood was through faith and aspiration, which were fostered through the cultivation of Prajñā (Nāgārjuna) and Dhyāna (Vasubandhu).

15. This recognition was due to two works attributed to them. Nāgārjuna is credited with the writing of the Daśabhūmikavibhāṣā (T. 1521: 地論). In the ninth chapter of this text, we find the first authoritative distinction between the "easy path (易行道)" and the "Difficult path (難行道)." This chapter has been interpreted as an expression of Nāgārjuna's personal beliefs. Be that as it may, the promotion of Amitābha devotion by such a revered author and the description of an easy method of achieving "nonregression" through faith in the Buddha was taken by later Pure Land apologists as clear evidence of the legitimacy of their doctrine.

Vasubandhu, the founder of the Yogācāra school, wrote a commentary on the Sukhāvatī-Vyūha entitled the Sukhāvatī-Vyūhopadeśa (T. 1524: 淨土論). Two significant points derive from this text. First Vasubandhu admitted his own desire for rebirth in the Pure Land, which added a further element of credibility to the Pure Land movement. Secondly, Vasubandhu presented a five-fold schema of Amitābha meditation, which became a key part of later Pure Land theory, particularly as expounded by the Sui-T'ang school, which we will discuss in the next section.

16. Cf. my "Quest," ibid., pp. 27-30.

17. A key text in such a study would no doubt be the Ta-chi-tu-lun (T. 1509: 大智度論). Though not a sūtra it promotes nembutsu-samādhi, and it is considered basically a Prajñā text. It is falsely attributed to Nāgārjuna and is a compendium of Mahāyāna teaching, but emphasizing nembutsu-samādhi. Thanks to Kumārajīva's extraordinary translation, however, it more importantly clarified and transmitted

the Indian interpretation of Amitābha and Pure Land ideas in the light of Mādhyamika concepts of śūnyatā and the cultivation of Prajñā.

18. See Fujita, pp. 603-613.

19. In the Pure Land tradition, as in Mahāyāna Buddhism generally, all rules of conduct proceed from faith (Pali: saddhā) to wisdom (Pali: paññā) in theory but in practice are, as all virtues, interdependent. Cf. Fujita, p. 604.

20. See Fujita, pp. 531-535.

21. Fujita, p. 611.

22. NAKAMURA Hajime, Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1964), pp. 116-117.

23. Fujita, p. 606.

24. Fujita, p. 609.

25. See below, p. 6ff, for more detailed discussion of nembutsu.

26. Fujita, p. 559; pp. 616-617. This Jōdo teaching was based on the Eighteenth Vow of Dharmākara; its establishment as a formal doctrine in primitive Buddhism did not occur until the time of the sectarian splits.

27. Fujita, p. 617.

28. Fujita, pp. 601, 615.

29. Fujita (p. 616) disagrees with Dayal on this point. Cf. Har Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1932), pp. 34-35.

30. See Fujita, pp. 538-540 and Chapter 4.

31. Sukhāvatī-vyūha, pp. 96-98. Cf. Fujita, pp. 537-540.

32. See above, p. 4. For an elaboration on these terms as they are used in this connection, see Fujita, pp. 545-552, and Allan A. Andrews, The Teachings Essential for Rebirth (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1973), p. 2, footnote.

33. Fujita, pp. 550-551, 616, and Andrews, p. 3.

34. Andrews feels that this was related to devotional invocations to the Three Jewels or the Triple Refuge.

35. Fujita, pp. 559-560.

36. Fujita, p. 555ff. See also L'Inde classique, Manuel des Études Indiennes, Tome II, ed. Louis Renou et Jean Filliozat et al. (Hanoi: École française d'extrême-orient, 1953), p. 371.

37. Cf. in particular the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures of the same period, e.g., the Heart Sūtra.

38. Cf. Fujita, pp. 566-568.

39. Fujita, pp. 570-584.

40. Particularly in the Larger Sūtra, in the Eighteenth Vow where the three are identified as 至心，信楽，欲生.

41. Cf. the fifth of Vasubandhu's 五念門.

42. The term "original texts" here and elsewhere in this study refers to the earliest versions of the Sukhāvatī-vyūha. Such an ascription is not without difficulties. See Fujita, pp. 167-168.

43. Naturally, this distinction is a feature of scripture-based ("inspired") religious traditions in general. The gradual emergence of sectarianism in early Buddhism and within the Mahāyāna itself, as well as in the monotheistic religions in the West, testifies to the tendency toward exegesis rather than practical instruction, particularly among the formal apologists. The tendency is documented in any number of sources and need not be pursued here.

44. Fujita, pp. 261-268.

45. This theory is not original with Fujita, as he himself admits. It was first presented by HIRAKAWA Akira 平川彰 in his Ritsuzō no Kenkyū 律蔵の研究 [Studies in the Buddhist Vināya] (Tōkyō: 1960).

46. Cf. Edward Conze, Buddhist Texts through the Ages (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 51-54.

47. Cf. A.K. Warder, Indian Buddhism (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), pp. 89-90, and L'Inde classique, pp. 589-590.

48. As discussed earlier, it is this connotation which was resurrected in the Prajñāpāramitā and Pure Land literature. The latter, ritualistic expression is more properly called Bhakti; on this point, however, Fujita and Dayal disagree.

49. KAJIYAMA Y. 梶山雄一, "Hannya-kyō 般若経" [The Prajñāpāramitā Scriptures] in Nihon no Butten 日本の佛典 [Japanese Buddhist Texts] (Tōkyō: 1966), p. 27.

50. Examples of the expression of this are found in the cave temples which were built concurrently with the development of early Prajñāpāramitā literature. Sanchi is a fine example. See Étienne Lamotte, Histoire du bouddhisme indien (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1958).

51. Fujita, pp. 506, 514-515. As pointed out above, while the the theory of Buddha-realms itself was current in early Buddhism, it was not until the Mahāyāna that the idea of "purification" (i.e., "Pure Land") was invoked. In fact in China the term "Pure Land (浄土)" came to be used as a technical designation for the Mahāyāna concept of

salvation. See Fujita, pp. 519-522 for further discussion of the development of the doctrine of rebirth as it relates to this question.

52. D.T. Suzuki sees the old law of Karma discarded with the emergence of the bodhisattva concept and the ideal of Karunā and replaced with the theory of "Transfer of Merits (Pariṇāmanā)". He explains this change in terms of the metaphysical theory of Dharma-kāya. Cf. D.T. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 284. Also see UEDA Yoshifumi 上田義文, *Bukkyō shisō no Kenkyū 佛教思想の研究* [Studies in Buddhist Thought] (Kyōto: 1951). For discussions of the Tri-kāya theory, cf. Edward Conze, *Buddhist Thought*, pp. 170-173 and 232-237, as well as E. Lamotte, *Histoire*, pp. 689-690.

53. The transcriptions 蓋樓亘 (Avalokiteśvara) and 摩訶那鉢 (Mahāsthāmaprāpta) are variants which appear in the earliest Chinese recensions of the Sukhāvatī-vyūha. Cf. Fujita, p. 174. For further discussion of the various transliterations of the name Avalokiteśvara, see Fujita, pp. 72-73, and note 16, p. 76.

54. Fujita, pp. 523-525.

55. Fujita, pp. 526-527.

Chapter Two

The introduction of Buddhism into China was characterized by a number of important features, not the least of which was the need for adaptation of sophisticated Indian philosophical theory to a new language and culture. As a result of the difficulty of such an enterprise, it was many centuries before discrete schools of Buddhist thought emerged in China. This period of assimilation and eventual discrimination has been well-documented elsewhere,[1] so let it suffice to say that two forms of Buddhism were recognized in the early years of Chinese Buddhism. These two generally correspond to the two categories alluded to in the previous chapter, that is, philosophical and devotional.

The textual history of Buddhist scriptures gives us a fairly clear picture of the philosophical interests of the early Chinese Buddhists, while the remains of great cave-temples in the north of China, constructed during the Northern Wei Dynasty in the fifth and sixth centuries, provide ample evidence of popular devotion. The Chinese of the late Han Dynasty, when the first translations of Buddhist scriptures appeared, knew little of the Indian and Central Asian history of Buddhism, and thus believed that all of the scriptures were authoritative and equally representative, so they attempted at first to reconcile Buddhist theories with traditional Chinese philosophy, particularly Neo-Taoism.[2] Later, with more authoritative translations available, discrete theories evolved and indigenous Buddhist thought developed. For the purposes of this paper, it is enough to summarize the growth of the Pure Land tradition, which formed the immediate prologue to the Japanese movement which Honen systematized in the thirteenth century.

While there are several variations among traditional Pure Land lists of Patriarchs, the Jōdo School (浄土宗) of Hōnen recognizes the following, which

will form the basis of our discussion of the evolution of Pure Land Buddhism in China:[3]

(India)	(China)	
1) Aśvaghoṣa	4) Bodhiruci	菩提流支 (菩提流志)
2) Nāgārjuna	5) T'an-luan	曇鸞
3) Vasubandhu	6) Tao-ch'o	道綽
	7) Shan-tao	善導

(Japan)

HŌNEN

I. BACKGROUND

Although Aśvaghoṣa (1-2c A.D.) is included in this traditional schema because the "Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna" (T.1666:大乘起信論), a Hua-yen (華嚴) text probably written in China, is attributed to him, it is not likely that the passages recommending faith in the saving Power of Amitābha and meditation on Him are authentic.[4] In any case, nothing new was added to Pure Land thought aside from the prestige of being included in such a great compendium of Mahāyāna theory and practice.

We have already mentioned the roles Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu played in the establishment of the Mahāyāna tradition, and have suggested the specific contributions to Pure Land teaching which inspired their selection as Patriarchs.[5]

In China prior to the establishment of an independent Pure Land school in the fifth century, a number of important contributions to the movement occurred. Perhaps the most important monk not only for the Pure Land tradition but for all of Chinese Buddhism was Kumārajīva, whose translations made it possible for the Chinese to grasp the full impact of the mass of scriptures

at their disposal.[6]

Tao-an (道安 : 312-385) was an eminent Prajñā scholar and Dhyāna adept,[7] as well as a prolific cataloguer of Buddhist texts. He was significant for a further reason, however, for he organized a cult to Maitreya while living in Hsiang-yang (襄陽). This indicates an important element of eschatological concern, which among his contemporaries is reflected further in the cave-temples in North China,[8] and which contributed to the evolution of both the Pure Land tradition under Tao-an's disciple, Hui-yüan (慧遠 : 334-416), and the school of the Three Stages, a short-lived movement founded by a monk named Hsin-hsing (信行 : 540-594).[9]

The last of the important precursors to the independent Pure Land school of the Sui Period was Hui-yüan.[10] Even more than Tao-an, he was concerned about Prajñā and Lao-chuang (老莊 : Neo-Taoist) philosophical speculation and Dhyāna practice. He was noteworthy for this discussion for a single reason. In 402, he helped organize a society on Mt Lu in Kiangsi (江西廬山) dedicated to rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land, a signal development in Chinese Buddhism which was to affect later institutional and popular devotion profoundly. Although his group was composed primarily of recluses and retired gentlement who were not concerned with popular devotionalism but rather emphasized nembutsu-contemplation, this fraternity became a model for similar groups in both China and Japan.[11] Further, the nembutsu-samādhi practiced by Hui-yüan and his followers served as a model for one of T'ien-t'ai (天台)'s samadhi methods formulated by Chih-i (智顗: 538-597). This method became the source of nembutsu practice in Japan, but affected Chinese Pure Land Buddhism minimally.

Finally, in the Japanese tradition the honor of first Chinese patriarch is reserved for Bodhiruci (ca. mid-6c). Bodhiruci is considered by Japanese Pure Land devotees as the first Chinese Patriarch, first because of his

translation of Vasubandhu's Sukhāvatī-Vyūhopadeśa, but more directly because it was he who converted T'an-luan to Pure Land devotion by presenting him with a copy of the Contemplation Sūtra.[12]

II. THE INDEPENDENT PURE LAND MOVEMENT

T'an-luan (476-542) was born near Mount Wu-t'ai (五臺山) in North China, which had been outside the main stream of Buddhist philosophical circles as a result of the social and cultural dislocation brought about by non-Chinese political control. In such an atmosphere, popular myth and ritual were naturally mixed with institutional religious beliefs, and consequently T'an-luan was first exposed not to orthodox Buddhist doctrine but to popular Buddho-Taoism, which seemed to respond satisfactorily to the religious aspirations of the people.

T'an-luan, converted to Pure Land thought by Bodhiruci in his youth, devoted himself to spreading Pure Land teachings and to organizing societies for the practice of nembutsu. His major literary achievement was a commentary on Vasubandhu's Sukhāvatī-Vyūhopadeśa, which he presumably obtained from Bodhiruci. In this commentary, which presents a surprising Prajñā interpretation of Pure Land theory, he emphasized three main themes.

First, because he was living in what was considered a degenerate age,[13] when correct traditional practice was difficult, he asserted that it was necessary to rely on the power of Amitābha's vows rather than on individual effort, which latter had indeed been appropriate during the earlier period. The distinction between own-power (自力) and other-power (他力) was thus formally acknowledged.[14] It should be noted, however, that T'an-luan did not restrict the application of his "Other-power" doctrine to nembutsu practice, and this point later caused rather considerable controversy in Hōnen's movement. T'an-luan further interpreted the eighteenth vow[15] to mean definitely

that invocation of the Buddha Amitābha's name was not only an effective (though not exclusive) practice, but particularly appropriate during an age like his own. His explanation of the legitimacy of invocational nembutsu rested on the inherent Power of the name of Amitābha.[16] T'an-luan thus redirected Pure Land thought and practice away from Prajñā-style bodhisattva aspiration and reclusive intellectual inquiry and toward a universal appeal for salvation.

There is substantial archaeological evidence that T'an-luan's efforts were not in vain. In the area around Loyang (洛陽), where T'an-luan lived and preached, popular Amitābha devotion increased dramatically after 500AD.[17]

T'an-luan's spiritual disciple, Tao-ch'o (562-645), was born just fifty years before what had been calculated as the beginning of the Latter Days of the Dharma (Mappō:末法),[18] and thus felt perhaps more keenly than T'an-luan the distinction between the Holy Path (i.e., the Bodhisattva course of the Prajñāpāramitās) and the way of Pure Land faith when he read of T'an-luan's career on a monument to him in the Hsuan-chung Temple (玄中寺). It is probable that he, like so many others in North China at the time, had been raised in an environment where Pure Land devotionalism was commonplace.[19] If we recall the political and social situation in China toward the end of the sixth century, when civil wars and turmoil were rampant, it is not difficult to imagine why the Mappō theory was so pervasive and why people were so receptive to a movement which promised solace and hope regardless of their ability to devote themselves full time to religious training and austerity.[20]

In his major work, the An-lo-chi (T.1958:安楽集), Tao-ch'o reiterated the distinction between the easy and difficult paths which T'an-luan had preached, but gave a cosmological and historical apologetic for the theory, based on the commonly accepted principles of the Three (or Four) Ages of the Dharma, which was most powerfully summarized in the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka

Sūtra (T.356: 法華經).[21]

The An-lo-chi is a response to criticisms, primarily those of the Vijñāna-vāda (Yogācāra) school, concerning the nature of the Dharma itself and the propriety of encouraging a dualistic philosophy of "release."[22] Tao-ch'o explained the theory of the Pure Land and rebirth in it as simply a form of 'upāya,' that is, using conventional truth to lead believers to ultimate truth.[23] This was a dynamic Mādhyamika argument and indicates Tao-ch'o's erudition in traditional Buddhist philosophy as well as in contemporary explications.

While Tao-ch'o was encouraging Pure Land devotion, particularly invocational nembutsu, as the Easy Path appropriate for a degenerate age, he did not disavow the efficacy of nembutsu-samādhi, but rather recommended it as his predecessors had for those superior beings and bodhisattva practitioners still surviving at the end of the second Period of the Dharma.

Thus, Tao-ch'o not only established Pure Land faith and devotion in China within the larger Mahāyāna tradition by providing authoritative support for it, but also reinforced the popular appeal begun by T'an-luan. In fact, only because of Tao-ch'o did the most famous Pure Land master, Shan-tao, even discover the teachings of T'an-luan or become a Pure Land devotee.[24]

After initially studying San-lun (三論 : the Chinese version of Madhyamaka), Shan-tao became a disciple of Tao-ch'o in 642. His conversion is significant since he had grown up in an atmosphere much different from that of his predecessors in the Pure Land movement. With the unification of China under the Sui Dynasty in 589, a fragile peace was restored and the development of the Southern Buddhist schools became more widely known in the North as well.

Shan-tao's principal work was a commentary to the Amitābha Contemplation Sūtra (T. 1753), but it represents a far different point of view from his

earlier writings. His "Manual of Amitābha-Nembutsu Contemplation" (T. 1959: 觀無量壽佛経疏) promotes a practical method of nembutsu samādhi for the purpose of accumulating merit and thus assuring rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land. It is evidence of his commitment to Pure Land doctrine as presented in the Contemplation Sūtra and in the teachings of Hui-yüan. It also reflects Shan-tao's early exposure to the disciplined monastic tradition, and perhaps the influence of T'ien-t'ai meditation practices. It encourages both visualization and invocation, but the obvious emphasis is on the former.

His "Hymns to Rebirth" (T. 1980: 往生禮讃偈), however, present a much more personal view of religious practice, and the influence of his immediate predecessors is more obvious. In his Introduction, Shan-tao attempted to categorize the qualities necessary for rebirth, namely, Faith (安心), practice (起行), and attitudes or modes of practice (作業). The first, Faith, is expressed in the three attitudes of the heart first described in the Contemplation Sūtra. The second is the five-fold nembutsu practice (五念門) presented in Vasubandhu's commentary on the Sukhāvatī-vyūha. The third is Modes of Practice, which Shan-tao described as lifelong, reverent, ceaseless, and exclusive. In the Hymns, therefore, we see a very significant change in Shan-tao's understanding of religious devotion.

By emphasizing the exclusivity of nembutsu cultivation, he tacitly rejected all other forms of Buddhist practice as inappropriate for the sinful and deluded devotees living during the Latter Days of the Dharma. Further, he classified all appropriate nembutsu practice into five types, in accord with Vasubandhu's schema. The five are:

1) Veneration
2) Adulation (Invocation)
3) Aspiration
4) Contemplation
5) Dedication

At this time, however, Shan-tao did not explicitly insist on the superiority of invocational nembutsu, since he classified them all as effective methods.

The most profound element in the "Hymns," however, is Shan-tao's explanation of the spiritual attitudes required for Rebirth. His description of the "Three Minds" establishes his own personal conviction of helplessness and degeneracy, and forms the basis of his later interpretation of Pure Land doctrine that invocational nembutsu was the <u>only</u> efficacious practice, relying exclusively on the saving grace of Amitābha.[25] These attitudes (三心) are Sincerity (至誠心), Deep Faith (深心), and Dedicated Longing (廻向發願心), and correspond with the three aspects of faith described earlier.[26]

In Shan-tao's commentary on the Contemplation Sūtra, we see the fruition of his personal convictions concerning salvation as he goes beyond both T'an-luan and Tao-ch'o by interpreting the eighteenth bodhisattva vow as advocating only invocational nembutsu, since the Contemplation Sūtra's gradation of sentient beings promised rebirth to the lowest-grade aspirant with simply ten "callings" on the saving grace of Amitābha.[27] He does not altogether reject the other forms of nembutsu practice, however, but ascribes to them only auxiliary status. This became a critical interpretation in Japanese Pure Land thought, and we will face it directly in our discussion of Hōnen's nembutsu teachings. Here suffice it to say that Shan-tao's Pure Land doctrine not only solidified the status of the Pure Land movement in the Chinese Buddhist community but more importantly established Amitābha devotion as an orthodox popular movement which would outlive the more traditional schools which were dependent on institutional support for their survival. In respect to the broader application of Shan-tao's teachings, it was the Japanese Pure Land movement which carried these doctrines through to their extremes, and this is the subject to be discussed in the following pages.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER TWO

1. For example, see Richard H. Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika*; L. Hurvitz, "Systematization"; E. Zürcher; and K. Ch'en, *Buddhism*, and bibliographies therein. Also see P.C. Bagchi, *Le Canon bouddhique en Chine* (Paris: 1938), 2 vols.

2. Paul Demiéville, "La Pénétration du Bouddhism dans la tradition philosophique chinoise," *Journal of World History*, III (1956); Arthur Link, tr., "Biography of Tao-an," *T'oung Pao*, 46 (1958), I-48; and K. Ch'en, "Neo-Taoism and the Prajñā School," *Chinese Culture*, I,2 (1957), 33-46.

3. Based on Appendix Chart IV in Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga, *Foundations of Japanese Buddhism*, Vol. II (Tōkyō: Buddhist Books International, 1976), p. 339.

4. See Yoshito S. Hakeda, tr., *The Awakening of Faith* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 102 and note.

5. See above, p. 5 , and endnote 15 above. Also see L. Hurvitz, "Systematization," pp. 6-7, and endnote 6.

6. See Allan A. Andrews, p. 21.

7. See endnote 5 above.

8. See K. Ch'en, *Buddhism*, pp. 165-177. Ch'en summarizes the observations of Japanese scholars on the north China cave temples. For bibliography, see p. 519.

9. The theory of Mappō (末法: saddharma-vipralopa) will be discussed further below.

10. MOCHIZUKI Shinkō 望月信亨, *Shina Jōdo Kyōri-shi* 支那淨土教理史 [History of Chinese Pure Land Doctrine] (Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 1942), Ch. 3.

11. This group was unrelated to the twelfth century White Lotus sect. See Daniel Overmyer, *Folk Buddhist Religion*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 227, n. 46. The theoretical framework is based on the *Pan-chou san-mei ching* 舟般三昧経 (T. 417, 418). See Fujita, pp. 222ff; 574ff for further discussion.

12. Mochizuki, *Shina*, Ch. 6 and Ch. 11, esp. pp. 134ff.

13. Note that the traditional dating for the various "Ages of the Dharma" differed widely.

14. Mochizuki, *Shina*, Ch. 7.

15. These vows are:

"18) All the beings of ten directions with sincere profound faith who seek to be born in my land and <u>call upon</u> my name ten times [in Chinese, ten times is interpreted as in a 'complete' or 'perfect' manner], except those who have committed the five cardinal crimes or injured the true Dharma, shall be born in my land.

19) I will appear at the moment of death to all beings of the ten directions committed to Enlightenment and the practice of good deeds, who seek to be born in my land.

20) All beings of the ten directions who hear my name, desire the Pure Land and practice virtue in order to attain the Pure Land will succeed."

(As translated in Matsunaga, <u>Foundations</u>, p. 30. Emphasis added in vow 18 because this translation is not accurate. According to Fujita, the invocational aspect ('call upon') is a later accretion.)

16. This is closely related to the Tantric 'dhāranī.' See KANAOKA Hidetomo 金岡秀友, "Dhāranī and Nembutsu," <u>Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū</u> 印度学佛教学研究 II-2(4), (March 1954), pp. 500-502; MOCHIZUKI Shinkō 望月信亨 <u>Jōdo Kyōri-shi</u> 浄土教理史 [History of Pure Land Doctrine] (Tōkyō: Jōdokyō Hosha, 1922), pp. 87-88; FUJIWARA Ryosetsu, 藤原凌雪 <u>Nembutsu Shisō no Kenkyū</u> 念佛思想の研究 [Studies in 'Nembutsu'] (Kyōto: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), pp. 121-131; and Fujita, p. 626.

17. See endnote 8 above.

18. Cf. TAKAO Giken 高雄義堅, Chūgoku Bukkyō-shiron 中国佛教史論 [Essays in Chinese Buddhist History] (Kyoto: 1952[?]), pp. 54-96. Also MOCHIZUKI Shinkō, ed., <u>Bukkyō Dai-jiten</u> 佛教大辞典 [Large Dictionary of of Buddhism] (Tōkyō: Sekai Seiten Kankōkai, 1954), vol. 5, p.4747.

19. Mochizuki, <u>Shina</u>, Ch. 6.

20. An interesting contrast could be found in the south of China at the same time, since the expatriate Chinese literati and intellectual Buddhist-contemplatives had been discussing highly sophisticated meditative methods and philosophical doctrines while awaiting the overthrow of the invaders and their return home. A contemporary of Tao-ch'o, Chih-i, was in fact formulation the most systematic and conclusive manual on samādhi ever presented at the same time that Tao-ch'o was writing his major work, the An-lo-Chi 安楽集 ["Essays on Paradise": T. 1958]. See Mochizuki, <u>Shina</u>, chapters 9 and 12.

21. Cf. L. Hurvitz, tr., <u>Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma</u> (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), chapter 6; and above, endnotes 9 and 13.

22. T'an-luan clearly distinguished two natures of Amitābha related to his transcendental Body (Dharma-kāya), a dharma-nature and an upāya-nature. This of course was a deviation from the orthodox position, which identified Amitābha as either Sambhoga-kāya and Dharma-kāya, or as simply Nirmaṇa-kāya. For a discussion of the relationship of upāya and prajñā implicit in T'an-luan's theory, see D. and A. Matsunaga, "The Concept of 'Upāya' in Mahayana Buddhist Philosophy," Japanese Journal of Religious Studies, I, 1 (March, 1962). For an interesting twist on the arguments on dualism, see Bloom's discussion of T'an-luan in Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1965), pp. 10-11. It should be pointed out that no specific references to the Tri-kāya theory or the svabhāvas appear in the original Pure Land texts. For the Tri-kāya theory itself, see L. de la Vallée Poussin, "The Three Bodies of the Buddha," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (1906), pp. 943-977, and endnote 52 (Chapter One) above. For reference to the nirmaṇa-kāya in Hōnen's Senchaku-shū, see below, p. 68.

23. The Lotus Sūtra provides an engaging and readable description of "expedient devices (upāya)," and clarifies the reasons for it through parables and vivid images. See for example chapter 2 in L. Hurvitz, tr., op. cit., pp. 22-47. Note in particular the reference to nembutsu, p. 40.

24. Mochizuki, Shina, Chapter 15.

25. According to Fujita, as I mentioned above in endnote 12, Shan-tao's interpretation was specious, being based on a false reading of a later version of the Smaller Sukhāvatī-vyūha. Nonetheless, even today the Shan-tao interpretation is accepted in many circles, and thus deserves a thorough reexamination. See Fujita, p. 547.

26. Also see Fujita, p. 131 and Mochizuki, Jōdo, p. 327.

27. Fujita (pp. 213ff; 558ff) challenges this argument in terms of the significance of the reference to the number of nembutsu required as well as of Shan-tao's description of invocation as the fundamental issue of the passage.

Chapter Three

The establishment of an independent Pure Land school in Japan in the twelfth century was not the result of a conscious effort at institutionalization any more than its counterpart in China, but the process of introduction, assimilation and eventual emergence of a discrete Pure Land tradition differed from that on the continent in a number of ways. First, the method and circumstances of the introduction of Buddhist culture were quite distinct. Second, the relative levels of religious and philosophical sophistication in China and Japan during the periods of assimilation differed considerably. Third, the interaction of indigenous religious beliefs and practices with those of Buddhism during the respective periods of emergence was more pronounced in Japan and thus contributed more significantly to the process of institutionalization than it did in China. It is this third factor which is the subject of this chapter.

Before the introduction of Buddhism, indigenous religious forms were diffused and sundry.[1] Early Japanese religion served two principal functions, the first shamanistic, the second socio-political. Those who had evidenced skill in magical practices, either to promote favor from local or hereditary gods or to ward off the unhappy effects of evil spirits or disgruntled deities, were recognized within the limited social nexus of their clans or their communities as both religious and, consequently, political leaders. With the slow and subtle encroachment of Chinese influence, Taoist and Confucian elements were assimilated, notably those dealing with magic or divination. This tradition contributed to a dual social and religious system, where the shamans and their leaders were assigned both religious and social prerogatives unavailable to the others. Eventually, certain clans came to be identified as particularly adept in magical practices, and these became

the basis for the emergence of the imperial and aristocratic families of early history.

With the introduction and adoption of Buddhism, however, there was a disintegration of the old theocratic clan system, and a resulting institutionalization of religious leadership in the imperial family. But this phenomenon had little effect in village life, and we see the influence of Buddhist practices not on the basis of its philosophical or literary excellence, but because its ritual was recognized as more effective in traditional functions than the earlier models. Certainly the elegance of its art and ceremony was effective psychologically as well, but the assimilation of Buddhist incantation and ritual was accomplished more because of its rich variety and particular effectiveness in protection (as opposed to devotion). Early on, this was particularly apparent in the assignment of funereal rites to Buddhist monks. By the end of the seventh century, at any rate, Buddhism was characterized by its aristocratic patronage but more significantly by its rural lay leadership, which contributed to the growth of upāsaka-practices outside the structures of Buddhist ecclesiastic orthodoxy.[2]

As lay leadership of Buddhist groups became more common, there was increasing evidence of the popular adaptation of Buddhism in the form of Hijiri, anti-secular charismatic religious reformers who continued the upasaka (magico-ascetic) ideal of the pre-Buddhist shamans.[3] This germinal reaction by the traditional local religious and social leaders to the intrusion of both Neo-Taoist and Buddhist faith and practices had perhaps its earliest proponent in Gyōgi (行義: 670-749), who abandoned the Nara scolastic centers and began a career of popular teaching and public service. Reformers of this kind emphasized piety and religious conviction, disregarding orthodox methods and doctrine for an expedient blend of popular folk belief and simple instruction.

With the growth of institutional Buddhism under imperial patronage, and the concomitant introduction of Buddhist legends on the popular level, therefore, we find by the end of the Nara period (710-794) a definite movement outside the capital of both asceticism and proselytizing. The proselytic element we find in such examples as Gyōgi, while the ascetic-magician element is characterized by En-No-Shōkaku (役小角 :634-701), who is said to have founded the Shugendō (修験道).

Shugendō arose as a discrete movement in the ninth century (early Heian period), but had originated among the Hijiri-Upāsaka mountain-magicians (Yama-Bushi: 山伏) much earlier. By adopting mystical elements from Taoist and Mantrayāna sources, they gradually took on the functions of exorcism and expiation. Two types of this"Hijiri" group eventually emerged: the itinerants, who travelled in the countryside and practiced asceticism in the mountains and forests, and the sedentary hijiri, who lived in villages and practiced exorcism and other forms of shamanistic rites.

As an element in all of this we find the influence of nembutsu practice increasing. Originally, with the popular dissemination of Pure Land teaching along with other Buddhist theories, nembutsu was applied principally as a magical incantation to dispel evil spirits (Goryō:御霊),[4] and to send the angry or dangerous ghost to Amida's Pure Land. This was a natural application, since nembutsu had in China been credited with mystical powers,[5] and in Japan it was easily adapted to indigenous needs. Opposed to the Nembutsu monks in vying for popular recognition were the Onmyō-dō (陰陽道), a mixture of native and Taoist (specifically, Yin-Yang divination) magic and art, and the Shugendō, an amalgam of Buddhist, Taoist, and native craft.

The first great catalyst in the systematization of Shugendō asceticism and the assimilation of nembutsu practice into mainstream Japanese Buddhism was Saichō (最澄: 767-822). Saichō based his teachings on the classifica-

tion of doctrines first systematized by Chih-i. His emphasis on the universality of salvation, based on the bodhisattva doctrine as well as the parallel concept of bodhi-nature, gave rise to a new hope for aspirants who wished to enter his order.

Saichō's categories of practitioners gives us an insight into his understanding of Buddhist soteriology, and shows the close relationship between traditional Pure Land theory and that expounded in the Tendai school. Contrary to the standard monastic practice he classified his disciples according to their aptitudes:[6]

1) Those who were "gifted," that is, who had completed doctrinal study and community practice of the bodhisattva principles, he called "Treasures of the Nation (国宝)." These remained on Mt. Hiei (比叡山) and served the nation by religious discipline and teaching;

2) Those "less gifted," who had only completed their doctrinal training, were called "National Teachers (国師)." They were assigned to serve as teachers, engineers, and agricultural advisors after finishing their novitiates on Hiei. They went to the provinces for social work as well, and to provide religious services to the people;

3) Those who were "least gifted," who had performed social services but had not received doctrinal training, were called "servants of the nation (国用)." These had generally been recruited by the provincial monks as assistants. A person was assigned to one of these three only after completing twelve years of ascetic training on Mt. Hiei.

Thus, within Tendai itself, one soon found the distinction between the life of the mountain ascetic, who sought isolation in order to cultivate contemplation and eventual enlightenment, and the life of social and religious service among the common people of the nation. By legitimizing moun-

tain asceticism and esoteric initiations, and by recognizing the claims and traditional authority for nembutsu and other magical practices, Saichō's Tendai school became the inspiration and orthodox foundation for the nembutsu/Pure Land movement which Hōnen clarified and systematized four centuries later.

The second of the major leaders of institutional Buddhism during the Heian period was Kūkai (空海: 774-835), a younger contemporary of Saichō. After a Confucian education as a youth, Kūkai entered the life of a zoku-hijiri (雑聖: lay Buddhist practicing asceticism in the mountains) and, finally convinced that Buddhism and Buddho-Taoist mysticism offered more satisfaction than his Confucian studies, abandoned his earlier education altogether and entered novitiate training at the Makino-o-San Temple (槇尾山) in 798. Shortly thereafter, he was enlisted by the court to study in China, and departed in 804. Upon his return, he established the Shingon (真言) esoteric tradition and is widely acclaimed as the greatest Buddhist figure in all of Japanese history.[7]

The primary achievements of both Saichō and Kūkai in the light of our discussion are twofold. First, they introduced and legitimized the Shugendō practices which until that time had remained outside of the orthodox tradition. By integrating and systematizing the miscellaneous (雑) Upāsaka traditions, they were, each in his own way, able to effect a conciliation of these diverse practices with the orthodox Buddhist schools centered in Nara. Their interest in, and successful adaptation of, Shugendō practices was no doubt related to their early experiences with mountain asceticism. Second, we must note their truly genuine desire to popularize Buddhism, which until they began their careers had been aristocratic and unavailable to the common man, except through folk-level interpretations.

Ennin (圓仁 : 794-864), Saichō's successor, was the first to promote nembutsu as a mantra within the Tendai meditation schema which had been transmitted from China in Chih-i's commentary to the Contemplation Sūtra. By the beginning of the tenth century, however, the combination of increased social instability and the immanence of a lost hope for religious satisfaction with the onset of the Latter Days of the Dharma, provided the nembutsu-hijiri with a unique setting for the propagation of their faith. We find during this period two figures who epitomize the growth of nembutsu practice and faith in Amitābha (Japn.: Amida).

Genshin (源信 : 942-1017) was a Tendai monk who had been exposed to Pure Land teaching as a novice under Ryōgen (良源 : 911-985). At about the age of 25, however, he retired from the Hiei headquarters temple to a compound near Yokawa (横川). There he devoted his life to scholarship and meditation, the fruits of which were compiled in his "Essentials for Rebirth" (<u>Ojōyōshū</u>: 往生要集), completed in 985. The work subordinates orthodox Tendai practices and doctrine to the Pure Land position on salvation. Yet in some other works he subordinated Pure Land teachings to those of standard Tendai, so we are left with a germinal and inconsistent analysis and system. But the Ojōyōshū provided the first systematic Japanese exposition of Pure Land doctrine, and Genshin's formation of a Nembutsu-samādhi society the following year testifies to his conviction concerning nembutsu practice within a larger framework of discipline. Nembutsu fraternities such as this, moreover, became quite popular, and as in China,[8] they served to provide "mutual edification in the religious life and more especially for mutual assistance at the time of the deaths and funerals of its members."[9] Private compounds for these societies became more and more numerous, serving laity and disenchanted monks alike as centers for retreat and spiritual instruction. There is no evidence, however, that the founders or leaders of such groups intended by their formation to

separate from orthodox Buddhist institutions or to establish independent sects of their own.

The less traditional precursor of the Kamakura Pure Land movement was another Tendai monk of the tenth century, Kūya (空也 : 903-972). Affectionately known as the "monk of the market place," Kūya travelled from village to village, preaching about the Pure Land and entertaining the locals with inspirational dance and song. He initiated the practice of the "dancing nembutsu," which was introduced as a Buddhist adaptation of earlier dancing rituals to ward off plagues. He encouraged Amida-invocation for both material and spiritual success, stressing individual faith and unceasing practice of nembutsu. He had been an Upāsaka shaman, and was credited by his biographers with having been the chief catalyst in the popularization of Amida faith up to the time.

By the eleventh century, the pessimism which had emerged just after the deaths of Saichō and Kūkai became more pervasive and profound.[10] During this period, the Tendai tradition again contributed significantly to the evolution of nembutsu practice. Ryōnin (良忍 : 1072-1132) is credited with establishing the Nembutsu branch of Tendai, by integrating Kegon (華厳) and Tendai doctrines of universal salvation and the interpenetration of all existence, with the Pure Land teaching of rebirth in Amida's Paradise. He instituted the "nembutsu chant," and promulgated "circulating nembutsu," which later formed the basis for the independent Yūzū-Nembutsu school (融通念佛宗). The application of orthodox doctrine can be seen in his interpretation of "merit-transference", whereby all individuals share in a pool of merit, and can draw or transfer merit applicable to salvation.[11] This theory, while not particularly revolutionary, was quite effective in drawing converts to nembutsu practice, as well as in systematizing further the Pure Land doctrine.

It was not, however, until Hōnen, born the year after Ryōnin died, that all of these diverse forms became integrated in a popular yet authoritative

movement which finally established the independence of an indigenous Buddhist institution in Japan.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER THREE

1. I have relied on the following three works by HORI Ichirō for much of the material in this chapter: 1) Folk Religion in Japan ed. by J. Kitagawa and A. Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968); 2) Wagakuni minkan-shinkō-shi no kenkyū 我が国民間信仰史の研究 [Studies in the History of Folk Religion in Japan], 2 vols. (Tōkyō: Sōgensha, 1955); and 3) "On the Concept of Hijiri (Holy-man)," NUMEN V, No. 2 (April 1958), pp. 128-160, and No. 3 (September 1958), pp. 199-232.

2. See the works of Hori for the interaction of traditional and Buddhist beliefs and practices. Also see Joseph M. Kitagawa, Religion in Japanese History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), ch 1, for an historical perspective on the same issue.

3. See Hori, NUMEN for further details.

4. Hori, Folk Religion, pp. 111-127; NUMEN, pp. 155-160 and 208-223; and Wagakuni, p. 304ff.

5. See above, p. 29, and endnote 13 (Chapter 2). Also see Bloom, p. 54ff.

6. Clearly these are related to the Larger Pure Land Sūtra's classification of three levels of aptitude, a view common to many other Mahāyāna texts as well. For example, cf. Hurvitz, tr., Lotus, ch. 5.

7. For a detailed introduction to Kūkai's life and ideas, see HAKEDA Yoshito, Kūkai: Major Works (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

8. Cf. above, p. 27. Also see Daniel Overmyer, Folk Buddhist Religion (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 85-91.

9. Kitagawa, p. 77.

10. For example, Ivan Morris, The World of the Shining Prince (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964) and George Sansom, A History of Japan to 1334 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), pp. 212-233.

11. Matsunaga, Foundations, pp. 12-26.

Chapter Four

I. Immediate Historical Setting

The middle and late Heian period (tenth through the twelfth century) was one of increasing social and psychological malaise. While the Buddhist theory of "Mappō" provides a convenient handle to explain this phenomenon, it is necessary also to turn to the political stage to get a truly balanced picture of the world into which Hōnen was born.

Just as we saw the effect of the delicately balanced relationship between the Imperial family and the aristocratic clans in the sixth and seventh century, so also was that balance an issue during the Heian (平安) period. In fact, the Fujiwara (藤原) clan, which first came to prominence during the late seventh century, was in the process of consolidating its political power during the next 300 years, through marriage and subsequent Regency as well as through the expansion of its land holdings and thus of its wealth.[1]

It is this economic factor which affected the Heian social milieu most fundamentally. It created first an unstable military situation, due to the rapid growth of private estates in newly-opened frontier lands. These not only denied the central government nedded tax revenue; it also generated the need for increased security precautions. Private estate owners enticed non-landed opportunists away from their traditional roles by forming mercenary armies, justifying their actions by pointing out that under the land reclamation laws the provincial leaders had been appointed constabulary officials as well. The Buddhist monastic institutions in both Nara and Heian had also been granted certain tax exemptions on their land holdings, however, so that, naturally, their interests eventually clashed with those of the private es-

tates and they too began to arm. Meanwhile, the interests of the peasants were cavalierly ignored, and the disenchanted either turned as mercenaries to Buddhist or provincial estates for economic relief, or took refuge in the popular religious movements which offered them at least some hope for their next lives.[2]

All of this was not clearly reflected among intellectuals in the capital, however, since under Fujiwara sponsorship there was simultaneously a tremendous cultural flowering. Not only was intercourse with T'ang and Sung China vigorous, but domestic creativity was being actively encouraged as well.[3] The undercurrent to all of this, however, was a quickening sense of doom, reflected in literature by such key words as "aware" (哀れ) and "mujō" (無情),[4] and in art by the growing dominance of Amidhist themes of heaven and hell. "Mappō" had indeed infected even the aristocrats.

Eventually, even the Imperial family grew frustrated with its auxiliary role in running the country, and around 1070 finally had the opportunity to challenge the Fujiwara monopoly of political power. Thus began the confused institution of cloistered Emperors. By retiring from their official duties while retaining political influence (by rejecting Fujiwara regency), they were gradually able to accumulate their own estates, which were granted to them as retired emperors. They also engaged new advisors from the Fujiwara's rival, the Minamoto (源) clan. But by attempting to exploit this rivalry they unwittingly set off a series of internal political crises which drew all of the various parties with their own vested interests, in the provinces as well as in the capital, into a monumental military struggle which climaxed in the Genpei (源平) wars between 1180 and 1185.[5]

It was precisely during this period of political and social disintegration that Japanese religious institutions were being most sorely tested, and it was a time when confident and charismatic leadership was needed to provide

a vision of, and a method of attaining, a new and better life. Established institutions were clearly unsuited, but a new movement, which had its roots deep in Japanese history, had already begun to take shape.[6] The man who rose to direct this movement and to free Japanese Buddhism for the first time from both political and folk-religious allegiance was Hōnen Shōnin.

II. Biography

In trying to reconstruct the story of Hōnen's life, we are faced with a problem of historiography common to religious biographies in general, and to Buddhist biographies in particular. Being dependent in most cases on "internal" (sectarian) accounts, one is beset with rapidly expanding mythology and inspirational legendary accretions as the life of the historical figure recedes from the memory of the recorders. This is the result, of course, of two influences, one the process of institutionalization, the second of legitimation. The first is explained by Max Weber as an unconscious stereotypical occurrence in the growth of any viable religious movement.[7] The second is, in the case at hand, a traditional means of establishing a spiritual ancestry[8] consistent with the biographer's interpretation of his subject's teaching. The latter is a specific historical aspect of the former.

We have a number of biographies of Hōnen, dating from 1298.[9] I will attempt to summarize the salient points of these biographical accounts, trying to maintain historical accuracy while not ignoring the important sectarian accretions with which the story is customarily enhanced.

Hōnen, whose given name was Seshimaru (勢至丸),[10] was born in 1133 in the province of Mimasaka (美作), in Inaoka (稲岡) village, which was located south of the township of Kume (久米), where his father Uruma Tokikuni (漆間時国) served as a local Samurai. When Hōnen was nine, his father got embroiled in a conflict with the soldier in charge of Inaoka, a man named Gennai

Sada-Akirakashi (源内武者定明), who, it is reported, instigated Tokikuni's assassination. Tokikuni, according to later reports, repressed any thoughts of resentment or revenge, and urged his son to forgive and forget the crime. His final words to his son thus reputedly determined Hōnen's future. Hōnen's reaction, if we believe his biographers, was to flee to a mountain monastery, which exemplified both filial devotion and religious conviction. More likely than that, Hōnen simply fled during the night raid to avoid capture. The fate of his mother is uncertain; modern scholars assume she died during the raid.[11]

With the break-up of his family, we find Hōnen going to live with his uncle, Kangaku (観覚), the abbot of the Jōdo monastery Bodaiji (菩提寺) in 1141. Regardless of his biographers' excesses, there is no question that those early experiences affected Hōnen deeply and personalize for us the tumult which characterized the Kamakura period. The following year, at his uncle's suggestion, Hōnen moved to Mt. Hiei. There, in the northern part of the Hiei compound, he began studying under the monk Jihōbō Genkō (地法房源光). His progress was so rapid, however, that, after only two years, he moved to the Kudokuin (功徳院), where he became a disciple of Higo No Ajari Kōen (肥後阿闍梨皇円), the abbot of Kudokuin who later compiled the famous "Chronicles of Japanese History" (Fusō Ryakki:扶桑略院). It was at Kudoku-in that Hōnen officially entered the religious life, taking his vows from Kōen and receiving the tonsure at the age of 15. Kōen, himself a disciple of Sugiu no Kōkaku (杉生の皇覚), was a Tendai monk in the shamanistic tradition we discussed above. Under Kōen's direction, Hōnen began studying the three great divisions of Tendai,[12] but was dissatisfied with the worldly spirit in the headquarters on Hiei, so in 1150 he "fled from the worldly life" and became a disciple of Jigembō Eikū (慈眼房叡空) of Kurodani.[13] He was given the religious name Hōnenbō Genkū (法然房源空), purportedly from the

names of his two most influential teachers (Genkō 源空 and Eikū 叡空).[14]

Hōnen's study and religious practice under Eikū undoubtedly guided him through the traditional doctrinal literature, but also introduced him to the increasingly popular Amidist theories as well. Eikū was of course still well within the orthodox Buddhist tradition and as such emphasized Tendai meditation and the study of esoteric texts and the Vinaya Rules, but the synthesis of nembutsu-Hijiri practice with Tendai orthodoxy particularly suited Hōnen's personal religious needs of the time. He appreciated the escape from the militarism and factionalism of Hiei's principle compounds, even though he later abandoned the meditative practices which formed the core of the Kurodani-Ōhara (黒谷・大原) discipline.

Hōnen remained at Kurodani[15] for over twenty years, practicing the 25 Pure Land meditations and making pilgrimages. For example in 1156, when he was 24, he went on a seven-day retreat to Shōryōji (清涼寺) in Saga (嵯峨), then went to Nara for interviews with some of the great scholars in the Capital and to study the philosophy of the Six Schools. Among those he met and debated with were Zōshun Sōzo (蔵俊) of the Hossō School, Kanga (寛雅) of the Sanron, and Keiga (慶雅) of Kegon. It was also during this trip that Hōnen first came into contact with Myōe (明慧), who would later become one of his chief accusers.

While at Kurodani, Hōnen studied not only the Tripiṭaka, but many other literary works as well, such as diaries and historical chronicles. He sought out all manner of records which might help him in his religious quest: how to achieve personal release, as well as relief for all the other helpless and frustrated people he saw in and out of his cloister. He began to feel the confusion of depending on his own effort when no one elso seemed able to provide any better direction. Not only were the monastic rules difficult, but meditation and study were nearly impossible with civil war and monastic

militancy surrounding him. It was during one of his visits to Nara that he came into contact with the earlier type of Pure Land devotion propagated by Yōkan (永観: 1033-1111), Chinkai (珍海: 1091-1152), Jippan (実範: d.1144), and others. In contrast to Tendai nembutsu meditation, this devotion, based on Shan-tao's teachings, emphasized "Other-Power"--dependence on Amida's compassion and assistance rather than on one's own effort, which to Hōnen appeared increasingly futile.

It is then not surprising that when, in 1175, Hōnen was going over Shan-tao's commentary to the Meditation Sūtra, he discovered a passage which read:

> "If one only bears in mind the invocation of the name of Amida, and without regard for the length of time he spends on it in his daily life he does not give up this continuous practice, this will be called righteous and determined action. It is already in accord with the vow of the Buddha."

Through this passage, he realized that nembutsu practice itself was the answer to his search. He became aware of its significance for the first time, distinguishing between the nembutsu practices he had witnessed and experienced among the Hijiri around Kurodani, the orthodox Nembutsu meditation system (based on Genshin's Ojōyōshū) within the Kurodani-Tendai tradition, and the Jōdo teachings of the Nara schools passed down at the Tōdaiji (東大寺). Having found what he felt answered the existential questions of his age, he immediately abandoned his previous learning and practices and turned single-mindedly to nembutsu. At the same time he turned his back on Hiei. In his own account of his conversion he later wrote,[16]

> "This is surely the right teaching (法門 Dharma-Paryāya) for my disposition. It is certainly the right practice for my body. Since I have consulted all the Holy men ("Hijiri"), and inquired of all the scholars, there are no more peddlers or guides to seek out. After their lectures, I used to go with grief to the scriptures, or sadly turn to the holy teachings (of the masters)."

In the same entry, he praised Shan-tao's commentary by saying, "This teaching on the Western Paradise should be a guide for all practitioners." His taking Shan-tao alone as his authority dramatically shows how meaningful this encounter was.

Retreating first to Hirodani (広谷) to the west of Kyōto, Hōnen then finally settled in a hermitage in the mountains east of Kyōto, in a place near Ōtani (also known as Yoshimizu 吉水), where he entered a life totally devoted to nembutsu.[17] This move symbolized Hōnen's rejection of his own earlier training in traditional Buddhist monasticism, but more particularly his abandonment of Genshin's Tendai form of nembutsu meditation which was based on an own-powered interpretation of Prajñā philosophy, in favor of simple invocational nembutsu practice.

The fact of Hōnen's dramatic conversion upon reading Shan-tao's commentary represents more than simply another turning in Hōnen's religious training, as we will see below. In spite of his intentions, however, he did not in fact turn to Shan-tao's system of Pure Land practice but rather reinterpreted that theory in a way which suited his own spiritual needs and those of his contemporaries.[18]

Evidence that Hōnen correctly understood the mood of his contemporaries is clear. During the decade following his departure from Kurodani, he drew many followers including monks, noblemen, soldiers and common people to his retreat. That he was supported by wealthy benefactors as well as commoners is shown by the rapid physical expansion of his compound, and by the attention he eventually drew from the established schools on Hiei and in the capital. According to his biographers, he was invited to Ōhara (大原) in 1189 (1186, by some accounts) to debate prominent scholars of the established schools. While modern scholarship cannot verify this meeting, its mention in his biographies serves to highlight the increasing popularity of Hōnen's

Pure Land movement, which apparently was drawing the attention of some very influential patrons. As later incidents proved further, the movement was growing so rapidly that Hōnen himself soon felt constrained to order his followers to remain silent on theological issues and to restrain themselves in proselytizing for fear of censorship. The biographies relate numerous incidents of Hōnen's preaching during this time, and tend to substantiate the claim that his Pure Land movement was widely known and an increasingly formidable alternative to the established Buddhist institutions. Popular literature of the time bears out these claims.

The year 1198 marked another significant turning point in Hōnen's career. During the years following his conversion from the Tendai 25-meditation practices of Kurodani to Senju (專修 single-practice)-nembutsu, many important aristocrats had become his followers. One, the Fujiwara Regent Kujō Kanezane (九条兼実 : 1148-1207), requested a clarification of Hōnen's Pure Land doctrine, and in response Hōnen wrote his famous essay entitled "Essays on the Selection of Nembutsu Practice" (Senchaku Hongan Nembutsu-shū).[19] The following chapter will discuss the doctrinal aspects of this work. Its significance in the present context, however, is twofold: its appearance verifies first that Hōnen had by this time systematized his philosophical position; and second, he realized that the popularity of his new movement had created a threat (whether real or imagined) to the established Buddhist institutions. In fact, Hōnen felt it necessary to enjoin his followers from revealing the existence of the text or its contents, lest it be used to justify censorship and repression of his teachings.

His suspicions of course were borne out, for in the summer of 1204 the jealousy of the traditional orders on Hiei and in the prosperous monasteries of Nara brought an appeal to the government to censure the movement. Hōnen, recognizing the excesses of some of his disciples who were openly challenging

the traditional monastic rules ("Vinaya") and criticising the other schools and their practices, agreed to establish a code of conduct for his disciples.[20] But again in the fall of 1205, the Kōfukuji (興福寺) in Nara petitioned the government, citing the actions of Hōnen's followers, and in particular Gyōkū (行空) and Junsai (遵西), who had also been the focus of previous allegations. Although the court was largely in sympathy with Hōnen, a scandalous incident (either contrived or true) involving Junsai and some other monks[21] enraged the retired emperor Go-Toba (後鳥羽) shortly after the Kōfukuji petition, and so early in 1207 four monks were sentenced to death and Hōnen himself was banished to Tosa (土佐) province on Shikoku with five other disciples. He was soon permitted to return to the mainland, however, and settled in the Katsuodera (勝尾寺) near Ōsaka until he received permission to reenter the capital in the fall of 1211. He returned to Ōtani and his now-deserted compound days later, but, perhaps debilitated as a result of the political struggle and his subsequent exile, he died shortly after the New Year of 1212, at the age of 80. His place of death is the modern site of the Chion'in (知恩院), the headquarters of the Pure Land school he founded.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER FOUR

1. This was directly contrary to the intent of the Nara and Heian land reforms. Concerning these, see Sansom, A History, pp. 57-60 and 82-89.

2. Both offered a sense of community and kinship, which was a critical feature of their appeal during such an age of social dislocation. Cf. Sansom, A History, p. 107ff for discussion of these trends.

3. For a vivid portrait of this period, see Morris, Shining Prince.

4. These two words refer to a sense of pathos and impermanence. For a discussion of these terms and examples of their use, see Donald Keene's Japanese Literature: An Introduction for Western Readers (New York: Grove Press, 1955) and Anthology of Japanese Literature from the Earliest Era to the Mid-Nineteenth Century (New York: Grove Press, 1955), esp. pp. 92-96.

5. Cf. SHINODA Minoru, The Founding of the Kamakura Shogunate, 1180-1185 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960). Also see George Sansom, Japan, A Short Cultural History (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), pp. 270-347.

6. Cf the discussion of lay religious societies above, p. 27 and p. 41.

7. Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion, trans. Epraim Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

8. See Hurvitz, "Systematization", and Nakamura, op. cit.

9. See Harper H. Coates and R. Ishizuka, Hōnen the Buddhist Saint (Kyōto: Chion-in, 1925), pp. 77-83.

10. ŌHASHI Toshio 大橋俊雄, Hōnen--Sono Kōdō to Shisō 法然―その行動と思想 [Honen: His Movement and His Ideas] (Tōkyō: Hyōronsha, 1970), p. 14.

11. TAMURA Enchō 田村圓澄, Hōnen 法然 [Hōnen] (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1964), as reported in Matsunaga, Foundations, p. 58.

12. See Coates and Ishizuka, p. 133, and note 12, p. 138ff.

13. Eikū was a successor of Ryōnin, the founder of the Nembutsu branch of Tendai, which was later to become the independent Yūzū-nembutsu sect.

14. 源空 . See Ōhashi, p. 18ff for a discussion of the politics of the selection of this name.

15. Ōhashi, p. 22.

16. Ōhashi, p. 27.

17. Matsunaga, Foundations, p. 313, note 25.

18. As stated in his Introduction to the Senchaku-shū (T. 2608).

19. 選擇本願念佛集 (T. 2608), abbreviated 選擇集 .

20. Cf. Matsunaga, Foundations, pp. 62-63.

21. Matsunaga, Foundations, pp. 66-67.

PART II

INTRODUCTION

The basis of our discussion of Hōnen's doctrinal position is his Senchaku Hongan nembutsu-shū (選擇本願念佛集 : "Essays on the Selection of the Nembutsu of the Original Vow").[1] According to tradition, it took Hōnen ten years to complete the project, with the assistance of three of his disciples: Shinkan-bō Kansai (眞觀房感西), Zenne-bō Shō-kū (善慧房証空), and Anraku-bō Junsai (安楽房遵西)[2], who transcribed the final text under his master's direction. Today the original manuscript remains in the Rosanji (廬山寺) in Kyōto and is known as the "Grass (-hand) Manuscript (草稿本)," after the calligraphic style. This manuscript was at first circulated quite discreetly among Hōnen's closest disciples, but after his death it was sealed and engraved and then disseminated popularly. This first printed edition was destroyed during the sectarian persecutions in 1227 but later was frequently reprinted, so that the number of manuscripts which survive today is ninety, and there are well over three hundred scholastic commentaries.[3]

The term Senchaku ("choosing; selection"), which appears in the title of this work, is very significant. While clearly it refers to the soteriological necessity of this selection,[4] it can also be inferred that it refers to the personal religious experience of the monk Hōnen, who rejected the Hiei compound and all that it represented to him, and then after many years among the Hijiri at Kurodani, rejected that tradition as well and chose the nembutsu-path. The word thus implies "the willingness to take a risk of faith. With this motif of man's 'choosing,' Hōnen's Pure Land movement became qualitatively different from the earlier Pure Land cults."[5]

Hōnen himself explained the full title of his work in detail in chapters one through three. In chapter three, after citing Shan-tao's "Hymns to Rebirth," he outlined his revolutionary doctrine of selection of "single-practice nembutsu" in this way:

> Q. "How can we (learn) the principle of this 'selection'? Why is the eighteenth vow, which selects nembutsu alone and rejects all other practices, to be regarded as the original vow (本願) for rebirth? That is, why is nembutsu to be preferred to all other practices for rebirth?
>
> A. It's difficult to fathom the holy intent (of Amida), and it cannot be explained hastily. If, however, we were to try now to explain it through examples, we could identify two principles:
>
> 1) Superiority and Inferiority:
> The practice of nembutsu invocation is superior to all other practices, since it restores the merit of all other virtues. The merit of all other virtuous acts... (like...) are included in nembutsu invocation...since all other acts can be done while chanting the name of the Buddha.... Therefore, isn't it reasonable to consider rejection of the inferior and selection of the superior to be the (intent of) the original vow?
>
> 2) Ease and Difficulty:
> Nembutsu is an easy practice, while the others are difficult. (T. 2608, 5b-c)

Thus, here and throughout the work Hōnen is in fact recording the method of his own inquiry into religious practice and his search for the right Path.

Yet we cannot dismiss it as simply a "Confession." On the contrary, it expounds a theory which is rigorous in its consistency and clarity. It is a methodical doctrinal exegesis which attempts to systematize Hōnen's experience and to place it within the mainstream of orthodox Buddhism. The need for such an exegesis was perhaps a personal one, considering Hōnen's thorough scriptural erudition and orthodox training, and possibly it was conceived simply as a tool for those who had become

his disciples, as his biographers would have us believe.[6]

For the task of systematizing this "special" nembutsu practice, Hōnen utilized an extremely conventional technique.[7] During the period of its formulation, Hōnen and his disciples collected, from the scriptures and commentaries, the important texts dealing with Pure Land teachings, arranged them topically, and finally devised commentaries on them. The purpose of this traditional approach was of course to establish the legitimacy of a particular doctrine by explaining it first in terms of the scriptures, which were authoritative ("dogmatic"), then in the words of a recognized master, which provided a spiritual ancestry within the Pure Land tradition, and finally by interpreting the selected texts in such a way as to verify the initial proposition.[8]

The revolutionary feature of Hōnen's work, however, lies in its presentation of alternatives. Prior to the Senchaku-shū, Buddhist commentaries in both China and Japan had arranged and classified the various Buddhist positions, ranked them according to philosophical, religious, or historical paradigms, and then predictably placed their own doctrine at the top as most excellent or appropriate.[9] In contrast to this, Hōnen confronts his readers with alternatives, presents his arguments, and then, as the title of his work suggests, exhorts them to make their own decision.

> If (an average) believer desires quickly to escape the cycle of birth and death, there are (only) two proven options: (during this day and age, however, one has) to abandon the gate of the Sages, and thus choosing, to enter the gate of the Pure Land. If one desires to enter the gate of the Pure Land one has to choose between the Proper and the Miscellaneous Practices: one should discard the myriad miscellaneous disciplines and choose to return straightaway to the Proper Practice. If one desires to take up the Proper Practice, one must choose between the Principal and the Auxiliary Disciplines: one should likewise set aside the auxiliary disciplines and, having made this choice, devote oneself solely to the Principal Routine. The discipline of the Principal Routine is none other than the invocation of the Buddha's name.

> If one invokes the name (of Buddha), he will surely attain rebirth (in the Buddha's Paradise), in accordance with the Buddha's Original Vow. (T. 2608, 19a)

While there is no evidence that Hōnen intended to found a new school of Buddhism, he was working without precedents in his attempt to validate a single-practice doctrine, and thus there is considerable debate even today concerning apparent inconsistencies between his own life and the religious life he preached.[10] This topic will be discussed in the final chapter of this paper. Suffice it to say that, given the historical situation and religious tradition from which Hōnen emerged, the production of a work of such potentially revolutionary impact was a major accomplishment.

My discussion of the contents of the Senchaku-shū is divided into two parts. In the first section (Chapter Five), I will summarize the contents of the work according to its internal organization. That is, the first section will be a chapter-by-chapter outline of the Senchaku-shū. This will be followed by a more extended topical treatment of the major Pure Land doctrines discussed in previous chapters. In this way, it will be easier to isolate the traditional elements in his exposition, while clarifying those features which were uniquely Hōnen's contribution to Pure Land soteriology.

Chapter Five

The organization of the Senchaku-shū is quite straightforward. Generally, it can be said to be divided into four sections, each of the last three parts relying to a greater or lesser degree on Hōnen's interpretations of one of the three principle Pure Land scriptures. The first section is introductory and purports to establish Hōnen's teaching within the mainstream Pure Land tradition. Schematically, this can be shown in the following chart:[11]

	Chapters	Doctrinal Content	Traditional/Scriptural Authority
I.	1-2	Introduction: The Reasonable Path	Tao-ch'o/Shan-tao
II.	3-6	The Proper Path	The Larger Pure Land Sūtra
III.	7-12	The Proper Attitude and Discipline	The Contemplation Sūtra
IV.	13-15	The Accepted Path: Benefits and Endorsements	The Smaller Sūtra
	16 (and conclusion)	Summary and Acknowledgements	The Smaller Sūtra

Hōnen begins his dissertation by referring the reader to Tao-ch'o's distinction between the easy and difficult paths.[12] He argues that the most general categories applicable to the question of how to achieve the "non-returning (Skt: avinivartanīya; avaivartika)"[13] state are two. The first is the Way of the Sages (聖道門), and this he identifies as the difficult path (難行). It refers to the practices associated with the bodhisattva ideal.[14] In contrast, Hōnen presents the Pure Land Way (淨土門) and identifies it as the easy path (易行).[15] Going still further, he identifies the Difficult Path as dependent on own-power,

while the Easy Path relies on the Power of Another, that is, Amida Buddha.[16]

> The Easy Path refers to desiring rebirth in the Pure Land simply by means of faith in the Buddha, and riding the Power of the Buddha's Vow, finally attaining rebirth in his Pure Land. (T. 2608, 2b)

In chapter two, Hōnen cites Shan-tao's classification of various Buddhist practices.[17] Broadly defined, there were, according to Shan-tao, two main divisions. All those other than nembutsu were considered miscellaneous; nembutsu alone was Proper. Drawing on Vasubandhu's earlier schema, Shan-tao had identified five principle forms of nembutsu and accorded each of them validity, although citing invocational nembutsu as particularly appropriate during the Latter Days of the Dharma. Hōnen, however, goes further in ascribing unique efficacy to invocational nembutsu, by denying even auxiliary status to the other forms of nembutsu, except in a purely theoretical sense. In so stating, Hōnen asserts that there are even degrees of propriety within those generally identified as Principle Practices. Only invocational nembutsu is proper, and only when it corresponds to the Original Vow--that is, when Amida Buddha (and no others) is the object of nembutsu--is it to be considered standard and proper.

The question of the propriety of single-practice nembutsu and its relationship to the Original Vow is continued in the third chapter. It is a forceful statement summarizing the distinctions already outlined in the introductory section and carries Hōnen's argument for exclusive nembutsu practice even further. He bases his position first on Shan-tao's interpretation of the intention of the passage on the Original Vow in the Larger Sūtra, which reads: "If I become a Buddha, and if the myriad of sentient beings who desire to be born in my land call upon my name

even ten times, relying on the Power of my Vow, if they are not reborn may I not achieve Perfect Enlightenment." Actually, Shan-tao had misrepresented the Sūtra's intent[18] and Hōnen had misunderstood Shan-tao's application of this interpretation, but Hōnen was convinced that his presentation was sound both doctrinally and practically. Doctrinally, it is consistent with the Original Vow (as interpreted by Shan-tao) and in a practical sense it is the most reasonable understanding of the efficacy of single-practice nembutsu.

> Q. All good acts have merit, each leads to Rebirth (according to Genshin's Ōjōyōshū), so why do you suggest that this nembutsu is the only way?
>
> A. The recommendation of nembutsu is not intended to interfere with the practice of any other pious acts.... It is just that nembutsu is easy and therefore everyone is capable of rebirth through it, while the other practices are difficult and therefore don't provide such opportunities for all people equally to be reborn.
>
> The rejection of the difficult and the selection of the easy is considered the (intent of the) Original Vow.... The rich and wise and clever and widely-experienced are so few that if the Basic Vow were for those few who are capable of carrying out such diverse practices as commissioning statues and stūpas, or practicing "samādhi," then few indeed would attain rebirth. But Amida (i.e., Dharmākara) had pity for all men without discrimination and chose to help all men without exception. So he certainly didn't make his most important vow to help only those who could carry out those elite practices. Thus, the exclusive practice of nembutsu invocation is considered the (intent of the) Main Vow. (T. 2608, 5-6)

Hōnen with this answer avoided the intricacies of scholastic inquiry concerning the definitions of invocational nembutsu--he was writing the text not only for his educated sponsors and associates but was establishing an easily understood doctrine of practice which the illiterate masses of his day could appreciate. So while attempting to preclude orthodox chal-

lenges to his doctrine by accepting other practices as theoretically valid (but auxiliary), he was legitimizing his Easy Path teaching in the eyes of the ordinary devotees who were his principal concern.

The question of "effective nembutsu" had always been skirted by Pure Land proponents in the past, some of whom had indeed advocated invocational nembutsu but who in the end had admitted it to be but one effective type of nembutsu among many. Hōnen, however, was categorical, for he claimed that invocational nembutsu was the single practice appropriate for rebirth. He based this teaching not only on the scriptural evidence of the Vow of the Boddhisattva Dharmākara but also on the established doctrines concerning devotional aptitude (chapter four) and the Degenerate Age of the Dharma (chapter six). He inserted a summary statement on the benefits and advantages of invocational nembutsu (chapter five) between the more theoretical discussions of Buddhist doctrine both to maintain a practical tone and to preclude any tendency to get bogged down in petty philosophical disputes. He was writing primarily for laymen and thus wanted to appeal to their judgement rather than their erudition.

Thus, while in the opening chapters Hōnen admits the theoretical potential of achieving release through own-power under certain conditions,[19] in chapter four he presents a cogent apology for the Pure Land Way by referring the reader first to the variety of human aptitudes. By addressing the issue theoretically, he appeals to the layman's sensitivity and common sense, while avoiding (he thought) a direct confrontation with the orthodox monastic system, which was based on the Way of the Saints. To do this, Hōnen reviews the categories of men as first presented in the Larger Pure Land Sūtra. The highest grade is made up of those who leave the secular world and renounce all worldly desires. These are Buddhist monks. The medium grade consists of devout laymen who, although unable

to carry out the discipline of a monk, perform good works and keep the rules of conduct for the laity ("upāsaka"). Of the lowest grade are those who are unable to perform even the things mentioned above, but who sincerely desire rebirth nonetheless. To emphasize the significance of these differing aptitudes, Hōnen again quotes Shan-tao in his commentary, but reaffirms that even if there remain those of the higher grades, the fundamental effective practice for all is the same, that is, nembutsu.

In chapter five, Hōnen continues his argument for single-practice nembutsu, here identifying the obvious advantages of invocation. He first quotes the Larger Sūtra: "If there is anyone who, hearing the name of the Buddha praised, is so moved by feelings of belief and devotion that he dances in celebration and accomplishes even one nembutsu, know this: that person has achieved great benefit;[20] there is in fact no merit greater than this."[21] Hōnen then comments, "Would a person who could accumulate the unmatched benefit of nembutsu set about to do miscellaneous practices of comparably negligible merit?" Here Hōnen is presenting a very practical case. Not only does it make good "economic" sense to practice nembutsu, but it is really the only effective act which any of us can be sure of performing correctly. If even the lowliest of believers can achieve rebirth by simply one sincere invocation of Amida, then surely how much more reasonable to assume that people of higher capacity (if any truly exist in such a degenerate age) can achieve the same result through Amida's Saving Power.

Since it was the age of Mappō, Hōnen reasoned that to discuss the subtle doctrinal nuances and rigorous practices of earlier Buddhism was quite useless. In chapter six, he explains in detail the futility of those miscellaneous disciplines, noting that in such an age as his the ordinary man was helpless, without some outside Power, to carry out even

the most basic of practices. Again he quotes the Larger Sūtra, which proclaims, "After the beginning of the 10,000 Years of the Latter Days of the Dharma, all other practices will be outmoded, and only the Nembutsu will remain." According to tradition, the Mappō period was to begin 2000 years after Gautama's extinction, which, in the Japanese calculation, was 1052. Since they were already more than a hundred years into the Degenerate Age, there was no reason to assume that anyone capable of understanding or practicing the Way of the Sages still remained. Thus, Hōnen's single-practice Nembutsu was uniquely appropriate for the time.

Chapter seven is quite brief, and through numerous scriptural citations seeks to verify the assistance afforded by Amida's brilliant and pervasive grace to those who rely on nembutsu practice. Those deluded by a trust in self-reliance will not be aided by Amida's Power, however, since the single critical factor in Pure Land salvation is Faith in Amida's Original Vow.

In chapter eight, Hōnen takes up the subject of Faith and discusses it in terms of devotional attitudes. Hōnen's teaching on nembutsu practice is in fact premised on his interpretation of man's nature and the nature of the mysterious Power of the Original Vow. In his discussion of the three classes of devotees in chapter four, he had identified the nature or disposition of man as the basis for distinguishing between the classes of man. Now, in the longest (three Taishō pages) and one of the most critical chapters of the Senchaku-shū, Hōnen interprets the "Three Minds (三心)" of faith which were first introduced in the Contemplation Sutra. His exposition of this doctrine, which will be discussed in detail below (chapter six), was a crucial factor in Hōnen's apology, and it later caused much doctrinal controversy with the traditional schools, particularly the Tendai.

Chapter nine, while extremely short, is significant as a summary of Hōnen's interpretation of Shan-tao's Four Modes of Practice (四修法), which described the characteristics of effective nembutsu invocation. The four are:

1) LIFELONG (長時集): One should not wait until the last moment of one's life to call on the name of Amida, since there is a danger that one's attitude at that time will not be sincere. It should be recalled that the nembutsu societies which flourished around the mountain retreats had as one of their chief concerns the preparation of a proper environment, both religious and emotional, for nembutsu practice and mutual support and inspiration at the time of a member's death. Hōnen here attempts to legitimize these societies;
2) REVERENT (慇重修; also known as 恭敬修): One is to practice nembutsu with great reverence and veneration, for it is the sacred teaching of the Buddha;
3) EXCLUSIVE (無餘修): By this is meant nembutsu should not be used to supplement any other practice. Rather, all other practices are subsidiary to it;
4) CONSTANT (無間修): One should never discontinue nembutsu invocation, even for a moment, so that Amida and his Pure Land remain always in one's mind, and therefore the resolve to be reborn through Amida's Power will never fade.

Hōnen goes beyond earlier commentators, however, by simplifying even further the classification of these characteristics, stating that the first is the most critical since it precludes assuming a false sense of accomplishment which successful application of the other three might at any given moment instill.[22] Hōnen in this chapter is emphasizing the necessity of total commitment to the Pure Land Path, and the necessity of preventing the insincerity and superficial religious practice that many people of the time considered characteristic of institutional Buddhism.

Chapter ten continues the theme of constancy and commitment, this time citing the praises of Amida and his attendants in the Contemplation Sūtra for those who steadfastly adhere to the invocational nembutsu path. Listening to the scriptures and the other forms of nembutsu are not appropriate or in accord with the Main Vow: only invocational nembutsu is praised as proper and effective in securing Buddha-vision[23] and rebirth in Amida's Pure Land. The discussion in this chapter complements that in the previous one about the qualifications of believers. Here the critical elements of that faith and practice are assessed with reference to the stated resolution of the Buddha, and to the soteriological benefits which accrue therefrom. Even those who have accumulated lifetimes of foul karma can, by calling on the name of Amida, be relieved of the evil consequences of their past misdeeds, and at the moment of their death, "Amitābha will dispatch (the provisional aspects of) Amida and His attendants Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, to appear before them as they call upon His name, and They will praise them, saying, 'Because you have called upon the (power of the) name of Buddha, all your sins have been erased, and we therefore have come to welcome you (to the Pure Land of Amitābha)'."
Hōnen goes on to say that

> While hearing the scriptures is indeed a virtuous thing, it is not (what) the Original Vow (refers to). Since the practice of nembutsu alone is the proper practice (as defined) in the Original Vow, it alone is praised by Amida (Nirmāṇa-kāya). Furthermore, the effectiveness of the two practices in eliminating karmic consequences is quite different as well... (According to Shan-tao's commentary) hearing the Scriptures purifies the listener of 1000 kalpas of karmic guilt, while invoking the Buddha's name even once can eliminate more than five million kalpas of karmic consequences...it can calm even the most troubled of souls.
>
> (T. 2608, 13b)

Hōnen here once again relies on emotional reasoning as well as doctrinal consistency to substantiate his argument for single-practice nembutsu.

Chapter eleven expands on the substance of the previous chapter, comparing the benefits of "special nembutsu" with those of other practices, including nembutsu contemplation. Hōnen again points out the place of invocational nembutsu in the larger framework of Pure Land doctrine and cites further scriptural passages which support his contentions. First, he sets out to clarify the distinction between Buddha-visualization and nembutsu meditation as outlined in Shan-tao's commentary on the Contemplation Sūtra.[24] Nembutsu is identified as the "King of Meditative Practices" and invocation the single method of nembutsu with guaranteed results. Hōnen then identifies five characteristics of the nembutsu practitioner and goes on to clarify the relationship between these and the nine levels of aptitude among devotees. The crucial factor in all of these questions is twofold: first, the Power and scope of the Original Vow, which applies only to invocational nembutsu; second, the unique applicability of nembutsu to all grades of practitioners.[25] In this discussion, Hōnen identifies his nembutsu teaching with the dhāraṇī tradition[26] and calls nembutsu invocation the Milky Elixir (that is, most excellent) of all attitudes for salvation. Still, for the average reader, the gist of Hōnen's message is

captured in the descriptions which are provided at both the beginning and the end of the chapter of the benefits, both in this life and beyond, in store for the devoted nembutsu practitioner.

Chapter twelve, the last in the section based on the Contemplation Sūtra, is an explanation of yet another of Shan-tao's categorizations of practical methods. Once again, Hōnen uses the traditional question-answer format to clarify his theory of single-practice nembutsu and to place it within the orthodoxy of the Shan-tao Pure Land tradition. Here, the question concerns Hōnen's contention that, according to the Contemplation Sūtra (and the Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtras as well), Śākyamuni entrusted Ānanda with the teaching that invocational nembutsu--calling upon the name of Amitābha--alone was the perfect method of achieving salvation. Yet Shan-tao had asserted the principle of Calming and Dispersing (定散善), virtues which were originally related to contemplative techniques and which Shan-tao adopted with reference to nembutsu meditation. Hōnen, however, explains that the cultivation of these virtues was not intended to be seen as equal in beneficial efficacy to nembutsu invocation (as Shan-tao actually envisioned them). Rather, Hōnen contrasts them with the nembutsu path, and denies that the benefits derived from them are significant. In presenting this, he carefully outlines the methods of practicing each of the virtues. As for Calming (the Mind), there are thirteen types, but each is based on self-reliance. Thus, although they have indeed been advocated in the scriptures and commentaries as nembutsu meditative techniques, they are qualitatively different from invocation. As for Dispersing (Distractions and Karmic Debts),[27] there are nine basic types of beneficial practice, each of which is appropriate to the particular aptitude of the believer. But again, these practices are distinctly different from invocation, and

therefore inappropriate.

Hōnen regards thses types of "virtuous practices" as substantially identical, quoting numerous scriptural references, and finally concludes that they were advocated for previous ages, and only nembutsu invocation was provided by the Buddha for all ages and classes of believers. The only reason these other miscellaneous practices were mentioned at all was to contrast them with invocation and to show the obvious superiority of nembutsu through examples. It was, in Buddhist parlance, an 'expedient method' (upāya 方便). Nonetheless, what makes Hōnen so adament about the uniqueness of nembutsu invocation, if he admits the other practices were also advocated in the scriptures? He repeats his earlier apologies: first, only nembutsu is practicable in the Latter Days of the Dharma; and second, only nembutsu is in accord with Amida's Vow.[28] By virtue of His great compassion, Amida closed the gates of these miscellaneous practices which had for so long been accessible but which in the Period of the Degenerate Dharma were impassable, and in their place He opened through the Power of His Vow the gate of Nembutsu, the only safe and sure route to salvation.

In chapter thirteen, Hōnen expounds his belief that nembutsu invocation is the source of myriadfold benefits, while all other practices, though good, are practically worthless as sources of merit. He does this simply, in the form of two brief quotations, one from the Smaller Sukhāvatī-vyūha, the other from Shan-tao's commentary on the Sūtra.[29] The substance is the same: those who hear the word of Amida Buddha, be they men or women, and who devote themselves fervently to the name of Amitābha for a week or even a day, will certainly be welcomed by Amida and innumerable saints at the hour of their death and escorted to the Pure Land. Shan-tao describes this Pure and Perfect World and the

metamorphosis which Rebirth in it will effect. Both passages (the sūtra and Shan-tao's commentary) clearly indicate, however, that those who devote themselves to the sundry virtuous practices other than nembutsu will be incapable of achieving this rebirth. Hōnen concludes the chapter by exhorting the reader to recognize nembutsu as the Invincible Source of all goodness and the incomparable principle of rebirth.

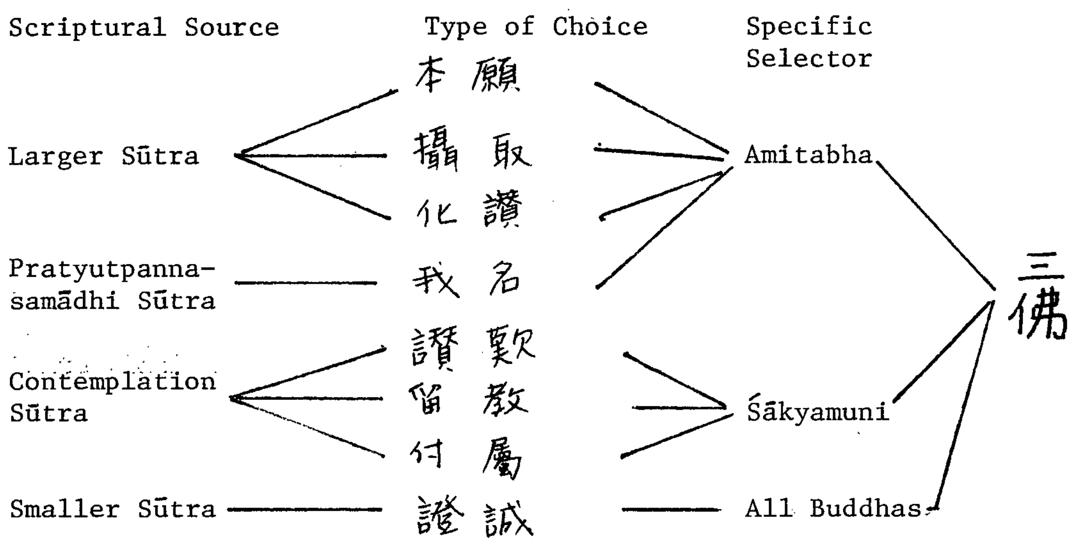
Chapter fourteen is an affirmation of the singular excellence of nembutsu invocation. It actually consists of numerous quotations from Shan-tao's various commentaries which purport to prove that the myriad Buddhas of the six directions are unanimous in their endorsement of nembutsu. When the question is raised whether any of the quotations actually prove that all the Buddhas have endorsed nembutsu, Hōnen replies that first of all the Pronouncement of Amida's Vow was made in the presence of all the Buddhas of the six directions, and their approval of His Vow is tantamount to endorsement of its intent and effect. Secondly, he claims that, although the Mahāyāna scriptures do deal with the other practices as well, in the end the only practice which is proclaimed genuine is nembutsu. The implication is that no other practice is pure and universally acceptable. The Vow itself is again the proof.

Chapter fifteen is a very brief statement of the protection and support promised by all the Buddhas to those who practice nembutsu invocation. Hōnen here harks back to the earliest use of nembutsu among the common people in Japan, that is, as a magical incantation to dispel evil spirits and ward off calamity.[30] It was certainly still part of the religious ritual of a great many of his audience, and Hōnen is attempting to legitimize this function of nembutsu practice and to integrate this element into his larger theory of Pure Land soteriology.

Chapter sixteen consists of two short quotations concerning

Śākyamuni's transmission of nembutsu teaching through Śāriputra (in the Smaller Sūtra). This is followed by a substantially longer and contextually separate section which is a concise methodical summary of Hōnen's doctrine as presented in the first fifteen chapters. While most modern commentators do not ascribe a separate organizational heading to this second section since it follows immediately (with no introductory heading) after the quotations, I tend to take the position that it is so distinctly different from the explanatory sections of the earlier chapters that it should be given a separate heading. In order not to deviate too greatly from the traditional view, however, I refer to this section as the Conclusion rather that attributing to it the weight of a chapter designation.

In his conclusion, Hōnen first categorizes the various kinds of Selection (Senchaku:選擇) described in the Pure Land Sūtras. These are shown in the following diagram:[31]



The variety of ways of viewing this Selection of Nembutsu of course in no way alters the fundamental meaning of the term. The absolute point is that nembutsu alone is to be selected if one is to be saved. In a word, "selection of nembutsu is considered the act of religious conviction."[32] By showing that this 'selection' was a fundamental and critical element in even the earliest of Pure Land scriptures, Hōnen is attempting to show the orthodoxy of his doctrine within both the greater Mahāyāna and the Pure Land tradition.

That this is the central issue of his entire thesis is clear. Furthermore, by beginning his summary with a detailed explanation of his use of the term 'selection,' and by positing the Selection of (Invocational) Nembutsu as the central theme of the Pure Land tradition, he sets the stage for the climax of his presentation, which explains his own interpretation of his place in the greater Mahāyāna tradition as well as within Japanese Buddhism in general and the Pure Land movement in particular. This begins with a very summary statement of the doctrinal contents of the Senchaku-shū. Then, through a series of questions and answers, Hōnen identifies the uniqueness of his position. First, the masters of the other (orthodox) schools do not admit the teachings on the Pure Land to be correct: they all still maintain the Way of the Sages. Shan-tao alone attributed singular status to the Pure Land teachings, and therefore Hōnen recognizes him alone as his spiritual ancestor. Second, he uses Shan-tao as his prime teacher rather than others in the Pure Land tradition. While the other Pure Land teachers did maintain that faith in the Pure Land is essential, they had not accomplished Pure Land Samādhi (that is, they had not had the experience of nembutsu-induced visions), as Shan-tao had. The implication is that they were not apt to, either, unless they espoused his single-practice doctrine, and, without such a

vision, they were unqualified to be accepted as spiritual masters. Third, even such a gifted Pure Land teacher as Hieiguan (a Korean),[33] who had achieved nembutsu samādhi, was not considered his master since Hieiguan himself was a disciple of Shan-tao; a disciple is not a master, and a master surely not a disciple. It is simply out of the question. Fourth, it is not really a matter of traditional concepts of lineage. Certainly, if that were the case, Hōnen would have to recognize Tao-ch'o as his spiritual ancestor, since Tao-ch'o had been Shan-tao's master (in the traditional lineage). While Tao-ch'o was unquestionably a great teacher, he had not accomplished nembutsu-samādhi, and therefore it was uncertain if he had achieved rebirth in Amida's Pure Land. In the case of Shan-tao, on the other hand, Hōnen quotes numerous sources, including Shan-tao's own testimonies, to establish that Shan-tao had in fact had visions of Amida and His Pure Land and had indeed achieved rebirth in it. Hōnen continues his praise of Shan-tao for a great deal of the rest of the concluding section, and by so doing provides a brilliant summary of the benefits of nembutsu and a sterling tribute to his acknowledged master.

In the final lines of the Senchaku-shū, Hōnen outlines the motivation for his treatise. It was to share the relief he himself had felt upon discovering the nembutsu path with those of this contemporaries who could be convinced to make the choice--the leap of faith--which he proposed. He believed his was the only appropriate course in an age of degeneracy, and he hoped by collecting the essential teachings on nembutsu in one place to assist those who like himself had been searching for something solid to believe in.

ENDNOTES: PART II: INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER FIVE

1. For this study I have relied extensively on the commentaries of ISHII Kyōdō 石井教道 in Senchaku-shū Zenkō 選擇集全講 [Complete Lectures on the Senchaku-shū] (Kyōto: Keirakuji Shoten, 1959) and Senchaku-shū Kōgi 選擇集講義 [Lectures on the Senchaku-shū] (Tōkyō: Meicho Shuppan, 1976), as well as on various other commentaries and translations, to supplement my own reading of the original text (T. 2608).

2. Ōhashi, pp. 102-110.

3. See Ishii, Kōgi, pp. 10-51.

4. T. 2608, 19-20.

5. Kitagawa, p. 112, fn. 59.

6. See above, p.47.

7. Ishii, Kōgi, p. 10ff.

8. See the discussion of legitimation above, p.47 .

9. For example, T'ien-tai, Hua-yen, and Shingon classifications.

10. See Matsunaga, Foundations, pp. 60-62.

11. This is my expanded interpretation of Ishii's analysis.

12. See above, p.29.

13. T. 2608, la. Cf. Ishii, Kōgi, p. 115.

14. T. 2608, 1.

15. This refers to Nāgārjuna's distinction noted above, pp.5, 30.

16. Cf. Ishii, Kōgi, p. 117.

17. See above, pp.30-32.

18. See above, pp.31-32.

20. According to Chih-i (538-597), the third patriarch of the Japanese Tendai tradition, the term 利益 ("benefit") used here should be distinguished from the term 功徳 ("merit"), with which it is often mistakenly identified. 功徳 refers to the merit derived from personal good deeds, that is, it is the result of individual actions and not dependent on the transfer of merit from an "outside" store. 利益 on the other hand refers to the benefit derived from an external source, that is, it is not the result of the merit of individual practice but of the grace of "another." See ŌHASHI Toshio 大橋俊雄, Hōnen-Ippen 法然一遍 [Hōnen and Ippen] (Tōkyō: Iwanami, 1971), p. 114, fn. Thus, Hōnen is carefully distinguishing even here between the Way of the Sages, which relies on Own-power (自力), and the Pure Land Path, which relies on the Power of Amida's name and the Original Vow (他力).

21. T. 2608, 8c.

22. T. 2608, 13a-b.

23. See above, p.8-9.

24. See above, pp.31-32.

25. See above, pp.31-32 and p.63 .

26. See above, p.9 and p.29 , note 16.

27. T. 2608, 14c.

28. T. 2608, 17a.

29. 法事讃

30. See above, p.38 .

31. Adapted from Ishii, Kōgi, p. 695. Note the inclusion of a fourth Sūtra, the Pratyutpanna-samādhi Sūtra (T.417-8). Also notice the indeterminate nature of selection.

32. 故知三経俱選念佛以為宗致耳 (T. 2608, 18c). "Thus one knows that the Three Scriptures have singled out Buddha-recollection as their very essence, and that is all."

This is a most troublesome passage. Was Hōnen here intending to suggest his choice of nembutsu was in fact the first step on the road to founding his own school? Or was he simply saying that to select nembutsu in accordance with the Triple Sūtra (i.e., as the Buddhas had done) is the paramount achievement in Buddhist religious life? Commentators disagree. Some take it simply as a reiteration of Hōnen's consistent position, yet others, including Ishii, attribute much greater import to the passage in view of Hōnen's insistence that invocation is the essence of nembutsu. Ishii suggests in his commentary that this indeed has been and should be taken as indicative that Hōnen intended to establish a new Pure Land school. (Kōgi, pp. 695-696).

My position is between these two opinions. Based on the organization of the concluding section as well as on specific statements within the

body of the commentary, I conclude that Hōnen was cleverly avoiding a declaration of independence, yet suggesting that such a move would be logical and consistent with the intent of the Pure Land scriptures.

33. Hieiguan (慧灌: Hyegwan) was a seventh century Korean who came to Japan in 625, and introduced the Sanron teachings (三論宗) to the Nara schools. He lived in Gangōji (元興寺) in Nara, which was the first monastery built in Japan.

Chapter Six

Hōnen's exegesis, as indicated in the previous chapter, was systematic and rigorous, yet was it significant as a revolutionary teaching in the greater Pure Land tradition, or was it simply a restatement of orthodox doctrines and previously transmitted interpretations? Surely there is a strong element of orthodoxy in Hōnen's presentation, but as I have tried to suggest, it was in those features of Pure Land thought which, until Hōnen, had retained traditional Mahāyāna characteristics that Hōnen's contribution was original.

Hōnen's unique position in the Pure Land tradition can be recognized by recalling the original doctrines described in Chapter One of this essay and comparing them with Hōnen's interpretations as presented in the Senchaku-shū. Such a topical summary will serve to highlight the enduring features of classical Pure Land thought and to isolate those elements which Hōnen espoused to establish his unprecedented single-practice doctrine of invocational nembutsu.

The critical Pure Land doctrines presented in Chapter One were four: Faith, Devotional Attitude, Nembutsu Practice, and Rebirth. It was pointed out that the concept of Faith was intimately linked with Devotional Attitudes; this was particularly true in later Pure Land soteriology and culminated in Hōnen's exegesis of the Three Devotional Attitudes. The question of proper Nembutsu Practice, which is the logical correlate of the problem of Attitude, was seen by Hōnen as a simple exclusive selection of invocational nembutsu. His explanation is uncomplicated, but his position is radical: by advocating this easy and practical practice as the single salutary method appropriate to his age, Hōnen in fact departed on a very unorthodox course which even his master Shan-tao had not espoused, though as we have seen

Hōnen maintained that his was simply a transmission of Shan-tao's traditional Pure Land interpretation. Finally, on the doctrine of Rebirth, Hōnen emphasized the manner and form of Rebirth described in Chapter One above (p.13) but made much less of the distinction between the highest and lower grades of aspirants, and therefore of the qualitative differences in types of Rebirth. His assumption that there was virtually no one of the highest grade still alive in the Latter Days of the Dharma precluded the necessity of discussing their fate, and his references to the Pure Land were limited chiefly to descriptions of an inspirational character.

A. The element of Faith as expressed in the terms Prasāda or Prasanna-citta was related in Pure Land thought generally to the form and efficacy of nembutsu practice and was identified in the Contemplation Sūtra and by Chinese commentators as a mental attitude. This mental attitude was defined by three interrelated aspects of psychological orientation, each of which was requisite for effective nembutsu. The three aspects of this Faith (安心) are Sincerity, Profound Trust, and Dedication and Longing. Shan-tao was the first to explain them in detail and, in Chapter 8 of the Senchaku-shū, Hōnen relies to a great extent on his comments. The following diagram[1] summarizes these characteristics of Faith.

	Smaller Sutra	Large Sutra	Contemplation Sutra	Shan-tao/ Honen	Specific Referent
Sincerity		至心	至誠心	真実心	Zealous Conviction
Profound Trust	一心不乱 ("Untroubled Mind")	信楽	深心	深心	Faith in the Buddha's Vow
Dedication and Longing		欲生我国	廻向発願心	廻向発願心	Desire for Rebirth and Bodhisattva Resolve

Of the first characteristic, Sincerity, Hōnen identifies two forms; in a personal sense, it is the conviction that one will indeed be saved if all other paths are abandoned, that is, if the Easy Path of nembutsu practice alone is zealously adhered to. This identifies the required compatibility of internal attitude (zeal) and external form (nembutsu). In a larger sense, it is the commitment to help others achieve salvation by sharing the understanding of "sincerity" which they themselves have acquired.

We can see in this aspect of Pure Land Faith the basic elements of religious conviction common to all Mahāyāna Buddhism: 1) simplicity of character, integrity, ingenuousness, the absence of hypocrisy which is naturally assumed to be a necessary attitude in other ethical systems as well; 2) positive altruism, which is realized in the bodhisattva Dharmākara's vows and which is characterized by the bodhisattva ideal.

Because Hōnen's entire thesis is based on the inability of "modern man" to actually realize the second form in the Latter Days of the Dharma, however, he does not pursue the matter of bodhisattva altruism. Instead, he emphasizes the all-encompassing features of this sincerity in daily life, enjoining its integration and application in thought, word, and deed. "Do not treat these things lightly: the internal and external, the clear and obscure, all are essential aspects of this attitude we call 'Sincerity.'"

Furthermore, Hōnen specifies the application of this attitude in nembutsu practice, as noted above. In this he goes beyond Shan-tao and other Pure Land apologists, for he isolates its meaning within the context of exclusive invocation and uses the sense of "zealous conviction to an established pattern of belief and action," much in the way that "sincerity (i.e., integrity, honor)" (誠(真);真心) is used in modern Japanese. He in this way applies a uniquely Japanese interpretation to a standard Buddhist concept,

not as a universal or absolute standard, but in the specific and restricted context of invocational nembutsu, which is the single salutary practice appropriate for his age.

The second characteristic of Faith is Profound Trust. Once again, Hōnen admits two aspects. The first is the utter belief that man is totally engulfed in delusion, that from the distant past he has remained ignorant, and that he will not now be able to escape the evil world nor attain even the inkling of a notion of release from these woes because of his profound and enduring ignorance. The second aspect is the correlate of the first. Man, recognizing his utter helplessness, must then commit himself completely to Amida's promised aid, submit without reservation to the infinite mercy and solemn Power of His Vow, and accept absolutely that he thereby will be saved. Hōnen thus insists that for modern man it is vital to abjure one's own ability to effect salvation and to rely entirely on the saving Power of Amida's Vow. Man's inherrent abilities, not to mention the intricate and sophisticated teachings and practices of earlier ages, were so obscured in the Degenerate Age that only by throwing oneself at the mercy of Amida's grace could one be assured of Rebirth in His Pure Land.

It is this absolute resignation, this total submission, this unswerving conviction which is called "blissful belief" (信楽:Shingyo) because of the security it affords the helpless aspirant.[2] Hōnen did not, however, disregard the fundamental significance of his interpretation. In fact, he realized he was opening for consideration a sensitive and potentially disruptive question concerning the critical elements of Buddhist Faith which challenged the very heart of orthodox Buddhist practice. He went far beyond any previous commentator in assigning absolute status to the doctrine of Faith,[3] and the central teaching in his challenge revolved around the

issue of dependence.

The orthodox schools maintained that the first critical step on the path to salvation was the arousal of Bodhi-nature (菩提心 ;Bodhicitta). But both Shan-tao and Hōnen maintained that the critical factor was a recognition that even without this step one could, by the power of Amida's Vow, be saved.[4] They both identified this preliminary Arousal as a subsidiary and futile effort, representative of the teachings of the "Way of the Sages." Hōnen, moreover, emphasized the foolishness of all such self-reliant practices by his twofold argument for invocational nembutsu, without directly decrying the doctrine of Bodhicitta arousal. He rested his case on the ease of nembutsu invocation on the one hand and on the superior efficacy of relying on Amida's infinite compassion rather than on the dubious power of individual effort on the other.

This dual apology climaxes theoretically in his presentation of the elements of True Faith, and particularly in the explanation of "Profound Trust." By first submitting that Profound Trust implies a deep-seated conviction of helplessness, Hōnen is reiterating his thesis that in such an age as his, self-reliance was not only futile, it was in fact a reflection of the depth of delusion to which modern man had receded. The complement of this theory of utter helplessness, however, was that there was indeed an alternative; an easy, superior alternative which denounced self-reliance, gratefully acknowledged the unfathomable Compassion of Amida, and relied utterly on the Power of His Original Vow.

The third aspect of this Faith is "Dedicated Longing." By this is meant the desire to be reborn in Amida's Pure Land and the resolve eventually to cultivate pure bodhisattva altruism and subsequently to return to this world to save other deluded beings. Hōnen illustrates the primary as-

pect by relating a parable known as the "White Path between Two Rivers."

Once there was a traveler who had come a very long distance, following a road leading West. Suddenly, he saw on the road ahead of him two rivers. On the south was a river of fire, on the north a river of water. The two rivers were less than 100 meters wide. They were deep, and it was impossible to determine how far in either direction each extended. Running between the two rivers was a white path about 15 centimeters wide. From the eastern to the western edge of the confluence of these rivers, the path ran only 100 meters. The waves of the river of water splashed against the very edge of the path, dampening its surface; the flames of the other licked the sides of the path, charring it so badly that it could be used only once--there could be no turning back. The path seemed to melt into the relentless torrent of billows and blaze.

The man had already traveled a vast distance just to reach this point and the area was uninhabited save by brigands and wild beasts. If they spotted him there alone, they would certainly swoop in and kill him. Fearing such a death, the man straightway began to run toward the West, but suddenly he again faced the great rivers, and this gave him pause. He thought to himself, "I cannot even distinguish the north from the south of these raging torrents. Even as I watch, the single white path through the middle grows ever narrower and narrower. Though the opposite side can surely not be far, how on earth can I get there? Undoubtedly, today I am doomed to die, yet is it better to turn back and thereby eventually fall into the clutches of brigands or ferocious animals, or to flee north or south where fierce beasts and poisonous insects will face me in swarming packs? Or should I head West, and seek to follow the path? If I do this, I might very well be overcome with terror and fall into the flames or the raging waters."

Certainly, the horror of such a predicament is beyond the imagination!

At any rate, the traveler continued thinking, "If I turn back, I will surely die. If I stay here, death is just as certain. If I proceed, again, I will die. There is no escaping death of one sort or another. Yet, I'd prefer to follow this path and go forward. The path is already there--surely, there's no reason why I shouldn't be able to make it across."

While he was thus pondering his dilemma, he suddenly heard the voice of someone approaching him from the east, saying, "Simply retrace your steps and you will certainly not die! If you stay there, death is inevitable." Then a person on the west called out, saying, "Make up your mind, be steadfast, and come straight ahead! I have the power to protect you! You need not fear falling into the fiery maelstrom!"

Now, the traveler had already made up his mind and come that far, so when he heard the encouragement in these competing voices, he steeled himself, and relying on his pre-

> vious determination, set out again on the path, proceeding straight ahead and permitting no doubt or indecision to cross his mind. But he had hardly taken a step when the brigands to the east called out again, saying, "Turn back! Come this way! That path is so treacherous you will never make it! You'll surely die--there's no doubt at all! We don't want to see you come to harm--come join us!" Even when he heard these voices, however, the traveler didn't consider turning back. Single-mindedly he forged ahead, concentrating only on the path, and in no time at all he reached the western shore, where he found relief and solace from his ordeal. When his true friends there saw him, they all rejoiced, and they celebrated together endlessly.
> (T. 2608, 11b-c)

Hōnen goes on to explain in some detail the significance of each element in the parable, yet for us it is sufficient to outline the major metaphors and substantive doctrinal implications. Of course the area east of the confluent rivers represents this world, the western area the Pure Land Paradise of Amida. The torrents of fire and water represent respectively the passions of rage and avarice which threaten the devotee from within and without and which impede his progress. The voices calling him from the east are all those forces and influences which distract one from the goal, including the deluding effects of previous existences and the pervasive confusion of the Mappō period in general, the misdirected guidance of one's associates and teachers, as well as the false dependence on oneself or on any other mortals for insight or assistance in achieving salvation. The voice from the West, of course, is that of Amida, offering reassurance that the White Path will surely lead to His Paradise and that by His Power the traveler will be protected. Finally, the White Path itself represents the single sure route to rebirth in the Pure Land, nembutsu invocation: reliance on the Power of the Original Vow.

Several things are significant about Hōnen's use of this parable to illustrate his doctrine of Faith and more specifically the aspect of Dedication and Longing. First, he pictures a person who is sincere in his

desire to achieve Rebirth; not only had he already walked a great distance, but even when he faced his most critical challenge, he did not turn aside from the "Pure Land" path. Second, the traveler's attitude at this crucial turning point epitomizes that sense of helplessness, of absolute resignation, which is characteristic of Profound Trust. His only support was his unswerving conviction that, although there were indeed no tangible guarantees of safe passage, since he had committed himself up to that point and there was surely no better alternative, he had no reason to doubt that the narrow White Path was his best chance. Hōnen's emphasis on the desperation, followed by utter resignation, of this hapless traveler highlights the effect of the reassuring voice of Amida, which is to say, the assurance provided by His Original Vow. Third, it was the traveler's ardent desire to reach the Western bank which prevented him from being distracted by fear or decption. Once committed to the Path, he allowed no other thought to enter his mind and, by concentrating totally on the Path itself--each step an act of total Faith and unswerving discipline--before he knew it, he was transported to Amida's Western Paradise.

Although Hōnen has made use of a parable which Shan-tao presented first in his Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra,[5] his interpretation is unique in a number of ways. For one thing, the point of Shan-tao's presentation was correct nembutsu meditation, whereas Hōnen has emphatically rejected all other practices besides invocation as subsidiary and futile. Hōnen, therefore, is using the parable on a much less allegorical level and in fact pointedly decries the application of any other method in his explanation of the parable, placing the proponents of such miscellaneous self-reliant practices among the thieves and wolves on the eastern side. Thus, although the parable itself is open to a variety of interpre-

tations, the thrust of Hōnen's message is that only by relying completely on Amida's compassion can success be assured. Furthermore, Hōnen has placed this parable in the center of his long and detailed exegesis of the characteristics of true Faith and uses it to place his interpretation in stark relief against the orthodox (traditional) doctrines of Faith and Practice which he characterizes as vain and deceptive.

Hōnen concludes his discussion of these three aspects of True Faith by once again warning that these three are absolutely necessary for rebirth, and negligence in developing any single facet renders the others invalid.

B. Nembutsu

The fundamental and indispensible act of nembutsu invocation is the only practice guaranteed in the Scriptures to be effective. This is the primary argument Hōnen uses to identify the method of achieving rebirth. All other practices are difficult and subject to numerous qualifying prescriptions. Furthermore, invocational nembutsu, according to Hōnen, is unique in that it does not depend on proper performance: it is so easy even the least adept can carry it out successfully. Nor is it preliminary or subordinate to other practices: it is the unqualified, supreme method of salvation, since it is the only act which relies absolutely on Amida Buddha's Power for its effect.

In chapter two, Hōnen distinguishes between Proper Practices and Miscellaneous Practices, rejecting the latter as inappropriate during the Mappō era and further classifying Proper Practices, which in general are nembutsu-oriented, into five types.

1) Reading the Scriptures (読誦正行)
2) (Amida) Contemplation (觀察正行)
3) (Amida) Veneration (禮拝正行)

4) (Amida) Invocation (稱名正行)

5) (Amida) Praise (讚歎正行)

(T. 2608, 3a)

Of these, Hōnen classified number 4, that is, Invocational Nembutsu, as correct (essential) and the others as auxiliary.[6] It was on this point that Hōnen broke with all previous Pure Land patriarchs and established the single-practice nembutsu discussed earlier on doctrinal as well as practical grounds.

Yet several questions remain. First, if it is so easy and so effective, why is it necessary to repeat the invocation, given that even one nembutsu is sufficient to assure rebirth? The answer of course rests on the quality of Attitude, which has already been discussed. If a person invokes Amida's name frivolously, then certainly that person cannot be said to have really performed the requisite nembutsu invocation. Thus the definition of nembutsu invocation itself is a critical feature of Hōnen's argument. To utter the name of Amida without sincerity, without trusting utterly in its Power, without believing that rebirth is the sure reward, is as though the traveler, arriving at the confluence of the rivers, rolled a stone down the Path because he could neither commit himself to the Westward course nor proceed unwaveringly on such an apparently treacherous route. No one would claim that his fate was more certain as a result of the experiment.

Second, what then should a person do to purify his motivation and establish himself on the Pure Land Path? As described earlier,[7] Hōnen outlines four characteristics of effective nembutsu invocation: it should be lifelong, reverent, exclusive, and constant.[8] These are evident in the parable as well. The traveler, it will be recalled, had already come a long distance ("life-long"), and therefore at the moment of final deci-

sion he was mentally prepared to rely on this Westward course ("exclusive") and to disregard the others. While he was crossing the bridge, he did not allow his thoughts to stray in the slightest ("constant"); he went forward with determination and conviction. Reverence for the sacred teaching of the Buddha and for the mysterious Power of His Name was presumably not felt to require any clear analogue in the parable, although as discussed above a reverent attitude was implicit throughout the parable. Hōnen furthermore constantly enjoins his readers to seriousness: the teachings concerning nembutsu are sacred and must not be taken lightly.[9]

C. Rebirth

In the latter chapters of the Senchaku-shū, Hōnen describes not only Amida's Pure Land but also the characteristics of those who have successfully carried out nembutsu and therefore are welcomed to the Pure Land Paradise.

Even before death, there are numerous benefits associated with nembutsu. Hōnen quotes various sutras and commentaries in his description of the nembutsu practioner. The person who practices nembutsu is like a white lotus blossom, the most excellent of flowers. Even from ancient times, the lotus has been the symbol of perfection, the celebrated flower upon which the sacred dragon of legend dances. The man who invokes Amida's name properly is thus unique among men, a rare and charming person, the finest of distinguished figures, an incomparably enviable and elegant prince of a fellow. He finds friendship and grace in every quarter. Yet that is just the beginning. The great bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta will be his constant companions, and as his dear friends will watch over him and act as his teachers and confidants, guiding him forward on the true path. Finally, at the hour of his death, they will

appear to him in the company of Amida and innumerable other Buddhas and saints to welcome him through the gate to the Pure Land. All of these are benefits which accrue in this life, but only to those who call upon the Name of Amida.

After death, the nembutsu devotee will be led into the Western Paradise by Amida's attendants, who will be holding lotus blossoms, and he will be seated on a golden lotus dais. No sooner will he be seated than he will have achieved the status of 'anutpattika (dharma) ksānti (無生(法)忍),' that is, the bodhisattva state of "non-arising (of obstacles)."[10] Thereupon, he will enter the higher stages of the Bodhisattva course.[11]

Still, Hōnen does not dwell on this metamorphosis nor on the idealized state of Amida's Pure Land.[12] Rather, he directs his readers' attention to the process of achieving rebirth and attempts to avoid the inclination to reiterate the distinction in the next life between those of higher and lower aptitudes. As was pointed out in Chapter One above, the achievements of those of the higher grades were traditionally described in metaphorically concrete terms, yet were in a metaphysical sense ineffable. Since Hōnen throughout his apology has denied the likelihood of there being anyone in the Latter Days of the Dharma capable of achieving these idealized states immediately, he limits his discussion of them to summaries of traditional doctrine.[13] For the rest, he generalizes by calling it a peaceful land, without famine or disease or the specter of death to disturb those who live there. And of course this is the original soteriological significance of even the scriptural descriptions: to inspire the average devotee to practice. Because Hōnen rested his entire thesis for exclusive nembutsu invocation on the Eighteenth Vow, it is natural that he did not go beyond the general goal of Rebirth itself in his apology. As was noted earlier, the desire to see Amida is the necessary prerequisite for rebirth itself,

while the cultivation of the other virtues outlined in the vows of Dharmākara were prerequisites for the spiritual metamorphosis which the traditional Mahāyāna schools had set as the goal for all devout Buddhists. Hōnen once again is attempting to redirect Buddhist attention away from esoteric doctrine to popular practice.

The parable cited earlier is representative of the method Hōnen espouses throughout the Senchaku-shū. The stress is on selection and commitment. Only one sentence describes the result, and that is a simple statement that relief was achieved. Such is the thrust of Hōnen's message: Faith and resolute practice, rather than erudition and rigorous discipline, are the essential elements of the Buddha's message.

The strength of Hōnen's teaching is evidenced in both the immediate success of his movement and in the continuation and development of his doctrine by his followers. Without his epoch-making treatise on the selection of invocational nembutsu, however, it is impossible to imagine what would have become of the Buddhist community in general, and of the Pure Land tradition in particular. Not only did Hōnen redirect Japanese Buddhism irrevocably by rejecting the elitist tendencies inherent in the state-supported institutions, but he brought Buddhism as a realistic and practical soteriological vehicle within the reach of the ordinary man in Japan.

While Hōnen's exposition of popular Pure Land doctrine was done with an eye on the orthodox tradition, we have seen that his efforts were not greeted with enthusiasm in all quarters. Neither was it the last word in the evolution of popular Pure Land teaching, but perhaps because of Hōnen's bold presentation and charismatic leadership the best-known Pure Land patriarch in Japan, Shinran (親鸞 : 1173-1262), was able to further the work of his master. For it was immediately after Hōnen's

death in 1212 that one of Hōnen's first and most acerbic critics, Myōe (明慧 : 1173-1232), published two books condemning Hōnen and his followers as heretics and slanderers of the Dharma.

Myōe's criticism centered on two chief concerns. The first was the misbehavior of some of Hōnen's followers, and continued the argument to which Hōnen himself had tried to respond immediately before his exile. The second, and to Myōe more serious, was Hōnen's rejection of 'bodhicitta' as a primary cause and condition of religious aspiration. While Myōe was basing his criticism of Hōnen's single-practice doctrine on the discussion of bodhicitta in the Senchaku-shū,[14] he was apparently ignoring the context and intent of Hōnen's presentation. Not only did Hōnen fail to elucidate completely his understanding of the traditional bodhicitta doctrine in the Senchaku-shū, but he pointedly avoided a scholastic approach to it. He was writing for the edification of the ordinary man in a Degenerate Age and as such rejected the questions of philosophical theory and Buddhist idealist ethics, in spite of his own erudition and eminent qualifications to pursue such questions.

The task of defending and clarifying Hōnen's nembutsu thesis was therefore left to his followers, the most eminent of whom was Shinran, who became his disciple in 1201. In his Kyōgyōshinshō (教行信証) and Gutokushō (愚禿鈔)[15] Shinran emphasized and elaborated that "the faith of the individual accorded by Amida's Other Power is nothing but the great 'bodhicitta'."[16] In his writings Shinran also clarified and expanded on the concept of Faith (安心) and its arising, which cemented the doctrine of Other Power and the absolute efficacy of Amida's vow. Shinran believed, moreover, that he was simply elucidating Hōnen's ideas, since he named his school the True Pure Land school, based on his masters' teaching, to distinguish and differentiate it from the other movements which other

disciples were starting.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER SIX

1. This diagram is adapted from Ishii, Kōgi, p. 356.

2. It is this aspect of Faith which later Pure Land apologists have most often emphasized, and which most fully captures the essential spirit of the original concept of Prasāda or Prasannacitta which was described above in Chapter One. It is also the essential meaning of the "Untroubled Mind" identified in the Smaller Sukhāvatī. But it was not on this doctrinal aspect that Hōnen focused, and because of this it was left to his disciple Shinran to expostulate its implications more fully. See Bloom, Shinran's Gospel, for a detailed discussion of Shinran's teachings on Faith.

3. See Ishii, Kōgi, pp. 349ff; 368-476, esp. 397ff.

4. The images in this parable are common to many other Mahayana scriptures as well.

5. T. 2608, 2-3; also, T. 2608, 17, et. al. Cf. Ōhashi, Hōnen- -Sono Kōdō, p. 95, and above, Chapter Two, p. 30 .

6. Cf. above, pp. 12-14.

7. This classification is based on Shan-tao and on the Hossō (法相) school's "Standard Interpretations on the West" 西方要決釋疑通規 (T. 1964), attributed to K'uei-chi (窺基 : 631-682).

8. Cf. above, pp.67-71 .

9. Cf. above, pp.14-17 .

10. T. 2608, 17. For a brief but trenchant description of the stages of the bodhisattva's course, see Tsukamoto, p. 482 (footnote one to page 185).

11. There are in the Senchaku-shū numerous references to the attainment of various traditional states of release, but these are generally limited to scriptural quotations and brief explanations. For example, see T. 2608, 9c-10, et. al.

12. T. 2608, 16-17.

13. As well as in his Shozōmatsu Wasan (正像末和讃).

14. See BANDŌ Shojun 坂東性純, "Myōe's Criticism of Hōnen's Doctrine," *The Eastern Buddhist* VII, No. 1 (New Series) (May, 1974), pp. 37-54.

15. See Bloom, pp. 37-59.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to analyze the role of Hōnen Shōnin in the evolution of Pure Land Buddhism, in hopes of determining the significance of his contribution to Mahāyāna Buddhist history in general, and Japanese religious history in particular.

By tracing the development of Pure Land Buddhism, both philosophical and popular, from its origins in India to its mature form in the middle of the thirteenth century in Japan, I have attempted to touch upon the crucial factors affecting its development. There is ample evidence that social and political elements in India, China, and Japan greatly transformed Pure Land soteriology and that the emergence of an independent popular Pure Land school in Japan was the ultimate result of these influences. The question of Hōnen's role in the final stages of this process, however, might fruitfully be reviewed.

Although attempts had been made in China to redirect the soteriological emphasis of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Pure Land school there was unable to emerge with a unique and viable method of salvation. Nembutsu practice was inextricably tied with traditional meditative techniques and was considered by most schools as a contemplative method. In spite of efforts to isolate invocational nembutsu, it remained a subsidiary practice within a larger schema.

This was true in Japan as well, although those who did promote invocational nembutsu increased with the changing social and political climate. Under the influence of the indigenous diffused religion, however, nembutsu practice, and in particular invocational nembutsu, became more common outside of the institutional centers. With the introduction of esoteric Buddhism in the ninth century, an attempt was made to reintegrate this nembutsu practice into the orthodox tradition, as it had been in

China. An effort was also made to universalize Buddhist institutions, but due to the scholastic inclinations of these esoteric schools, as well as the increasing secularization of Heian monastic interests, this effort proved futile.

It was not until Hōnen, who like many of his contemporaries was desperately searching for religious meaning in an otherwise chaotic world, that the Hijiri movement and the orthodox tradition were joined in a practical and legitimate form. It appears clear to me that it was Hōnen's unique character which made this union possible, for he alone was able to exploit his traditional training and adapt the orthodox doctrines to his historical circumstances and thereby extract the nembutsu movement from both the secularized monastic and the folk religious traditions to form a new and independent Pure Land school. It was in fact the first time that Buddhism in Japan had been free of both political and popular restraints, in that he had divorced the Pure Land movement from traditional Buddhist schools and from primitive magico-religious elements.

Thus, although Hōnen did not ostensibly intend to form a new school of Japanese Buddhism, his synthesis of these diverse elements inevitably led to doctrinal conflict and sectarian division. Perhaps the formation of an independent Pure Land movement was not the same as the conscious founding of a school. It little matters, for Hōnen's contribution to the history of Japanese Buddhism, and Mahāyāna Buddhism in general, has far outweighed the academic significance of such a question. It was left to others to discuss, but the accomplishment itself, as I have tried to show, was Hōnen's, and his full story remains to be written.

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